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# Perceptions of Body Image Among College Men

Colton David Janes

*Eastern Illinois University*

This research is a product of the graduate program in [College Student Affairs](#) at Eastern Illinois University.

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# Perceptions of Body Image Among College Men

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(TITLE)

BY

Colton David Janes

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## THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF

Master of Science in College Student Affairs

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IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY  
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

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Perceptions of Body Image Among College Males

Colton David Janes

Eastern Illinois University

### Abstract

This study sought to better understand what influences male body image perceptions among college men attending a mid-sized Midwestern university. A qualitative research approach was utilized to better establish a better understanding on how college men construct their body image perceptions. Nine male undergraduate students in their third year or greater participated in one-on-one interviews. These participants self-identified as a member of a single-gender student organization including a social Greek letter fraternity, university athletic team, and/or other student organization(s) on-campus. Results of this study revealed that one of the most influential forces of body image perception among participants was the reliance on others to establish normalcy in social environments. Furthermore, participants who interacted with those in their place of residence found greater influence on various health behaviors and how they describe their bodies. Participants were aware of available health promotion programs to help reach their body image aspirations, however, establishing a balance of academics, work, and social endeavors created barriers to change. Further research on this topic could include studying other single-gender groups as well as greater investigation into importance of residential community influence. In addition, a longitudinal approach focusing on studying body image perceptions from matriculation through graduation may allow researchers to better understand stages of body image perceptions and possible variances. Student affairs practitioners and university administration should seek student input in student health advisory committees and act as liaison between the student body and campus health services.

*Keywords:* body image, college, university, men, male, perceptions, single-gender group

### **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to current/future college students and student affairs practitioners who are amidst transition and strife during their pursuit of their college degree and/or in the workplace. Reach out to a roommate, classmate, friend, or colleague for help even when you feel discouraged. Those who surround you do care about you and your well-being, even if you feel otherwise. It is the hope that this research contributes to the growing foundation of supporting each other and leading one another towards a healthier routine.

### **Acknowledgements**

To my father and brother, Eric and Morgan, I simply cannot thank you two enough for your immense support and care for me. Throughout all of the many peaks and valleys that we have gone through, I am unexplainably proud to have you two by my side for the past nine years and for the many years to come. I hope to be a fraction as amazing as you two are. To my mother, Dawn, everything I do is to honor your memory and to leave this place better than I have found it. Your loving impact on this world is felt every day and I am blessed to have been raised by such an amazing woman.

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## Chapter I

### Introduction

As humans, we examine our own physical appearance thousands of times throughout our lives (Simmons et al., 2011). College is a time where many young people begin to evaluate the perception and attitude towards their physical appearance and the body image encompassing physical satisfaction as well as dissatisfaction (Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002). Simmons et al. (2011) reported that body image plays an important role in college students' emotional, social, and academic adjustment. There is a prevailing belief that there is a significant weight gain, dubbed the *Freshman 15*, and change in student's body shape in their first year of college which may also impact their performance in school (Simmons et al., 2011). How an individual perceives and alters their attitude as it pertains to their physical appearance is part of creating their image of their own body (Pompper, 2010; Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002).

One of the outcomes of women's movements around the 1980s in the United States was men feeling pressed against the limits of traditional masculinity and at times leaving them conflicted with their role in society (Pompper, 2010). With these changes occurring over time, men no longer own the breadwinning identities and, much like women, their bodies have also become objectified in mass media images (Pompper, 2010). O'Neil, Good, and Holmes (1995) used the general theory of masculine gender role conflict (GRC) to help explain "how sexism and gender role socialization interact to produce oppression" (p. 166). In a later study, O'Neil (2008), stated that gender role conflict is a complex, multidimensional construct that describes an unconscious

phenomenon that is created when perceptions of masculine gender roles deviate from, restrict, devalue, or violate norms.

Body image is closely tied to a sense of identity and there is some evidence that negative body images are increasing in both women and men (Simmons et al., 2011; Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002). Gerdes and Mallinckrodt (1994) found that college students who were less concerned about their body weight were among those students who stayed in college whereas students who were in good academic standing, but dropped out of college reported body weight concerns.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Identifying as an active male who exercised and participated in predominantly healthy behaviors during my undergraduate program, I have a specific interest in how other men perceive their body image. During my years in my undergraduate, I was involved across campus in residence life, admissions, campus programming, fraternity & sorority life, and club & intramural sports. Membership in these facets of student life required me to learn to efficiently manage my time as I moved from one activity to another. I learned through my experiences to maintain a form of balance that seemed to worked best for me. With the healthy balance of time management, support of my peer groups and faculty, and paired with my goal set to graduation, I left my undergraduate institution feeling healthy and happy with my physical appearance and with a sense of confidence.

Although I was involved across campus and maintained a healthy lifestyle, I often saw many of my peers engaging in unhealthy behaviors and at times I was tempted to engage with them. While working in residence life many times I saw other resident

assistants and students in our building staying up late balancing homework while also attempting to balance a workout routine. This challenging balance led me to start a fitness club for residents of our community where individuals could go together during the early evening and participate in fun activities while supporting one another. As a member of my fraternity, living in the fraternity house for three years, I saw much of what can only be called risky behavior. Aside from late nights studying and socializing with others, there were plenty of nights where members consumed ridiculous amounts of alcohol, ate excessive amounts of fast food or unhealthy snacks, and sometimes consumed high amounts of alcohol in one night, and would intensify work intensely work out the next day. Perhaps one of the most challenging and unforeseeable behaviors that I knowingly participated in was in my last year of being an orientation leader. Where the days were very long and we were on our feet continuously, it was important to stay hydrated, eat a balanced diet, and get plenty of sleep. For most one summer, myself and a couple other leaders would stay up late, eat “junk food” such as candy and pizza, and would consume large amounts of alcohol for sport, and go to bed at four in the morning. We knowingly engaged in this behavior, understanding we had to be on-campus ready to work at seven in the morning.

Transitioning into a graduate program where I worked every moment of my day to support and help undergraduate students learn has allowed me to step back and reflect upon my undergraduate involvement. During this time, I also witnessed students engage in behaviors that were not always the healthiest. This caused me to want to know more about the ways these students thought about themselves. I was able to have conversations with students who shared their feelings about how they balanced their on-

campus commitments and personal endeavors all while trying to figure out what the college experience meant to them.

The purpose of this study was to examine perceptions of body image among college men that attended a mid-sized Midwestern public institution. Specifically, this study was designed to identify what influenced individual male body image and if their membership in same sex student groups influenced their perception. There is little research that examines the predictors of self-awareness of body image in men as well as research connecting masculine socialization with body image (Schwartz, Grammas, Sutherland, Siffert, & Bush-King, 2010).

### **Research Questions**

This study sought to gain a better understanding of perceived body image and influences of body image among college undergraduate men across different areas of campus involvement. The men were selected representing membership in male dominated groups, such as fraternities and athletic teams. This was done to not only understand how the men perceived their body, but how their peer groups may have influenced their image as well. Through a qualitative study, the researcher looked to gather information from these students to answer the research questions:

1. How do men describe their behaviors related to health?
2. What social forces (i.e. media, social media, peer groups, etc.) do male college students identify as having the influence on how they perceive their body image?
3. How do college men describe their body?



**Significance of the Study**

Findings of this study will allow university administration to be more aware of how college-aged men perceive their body image based upon their involvement in programs and activities that can be found on college campuses across the United States. This study was significant as research tends to focus more specifically on how women perceive their body image and how it may relate to behaviors that potentially have damaging consequences (Pompper, 2010). If men already have a difficult time overcoming societal norms preventing them from getting help with their personal concerns, their perceived body image is no different. In his 1968 study focusing on the development through college freshmen through seniors, Douglas Heath looked at how participants mature over time. He found that seniors in his study claimed to be more resistant to changing when challenged by someone else. This intrigued the current researcher as he too looked to better understand how college affects students, college men. While Heath found that seniors reported being more sure of themselves and their development in college, the current study looked at seeing if college men are aware of their body image and how they perceive themselves. It was interesting to find how participants describe their body image and how they view it changing over their years in college. The current study sought to reveal how college men understand and perceive the bodies they live in every day. This understanding of body image's impact on college-aged men will allow university student health counseling and wellness programs to create and cater programs toward this specific population of students.



**Limitations of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceived body image among college-aged men. Since this study was conducted via interviews, the ability of the respondent to be honest and willing to share their personal experience with the researcher may not have moved beyond the surface level. If participants had a negative interaction or conversation in their recent history with how they perceive their body image, they may not have wanted to discuss it in their interview. The mood and attitude that the participants possessed while providing data may have influenced the result of this study. The responses that respondents provided may be varied based upon their individual perceived body image and peer group experiences. The researcher worked to establish trust in the interview so the participant felt less fearful in sharing his experiences and his perception of his own body image. One participant originally self-identified as a non-fraternity member and non-athlete but then shared that he was actually a member of a fraternity, which extended the number of interview candidates. While the researcher had no issue getting participants who identified as fraternity members or neither fraternity nor athlete, acquiring university athletes to participate created a difficult situation throughout the data collection stage. The researcher exhausted a list of at least ten individuals provided by the athletic department before obtaining the third interview from an athlete.

**Definition of Terms**

**Body image.** *Body image* is defined by *Merriam-Webster's Medical Dictionary* (2016) as an abstract depiction of one's own physical presence generated by both reflection of self and by observing the reactions of others. Cash

& Pruzinsky (2002) support further that body image is a person's perception and attitude regarding his or her physical appearance.

**Drunkorexia.** *Drunkorexia* is a nonmedical term that characterizes *weight-conscious drinkers* who enact compensatory behaviors such as caloric restriction and/or purging (including excessive exercise) to offset consumed alcohol-related calories (Barry, Whiteman, Piazza-Gardner, & Jensen, 2013).

**Obligatory exercise.** Exercise that involves a subjective need to engage in repetitive exercise behaviors and carries negative emotionality associated with missing exercise sessions (Pasman & Thompson, 1988).

**Psychosocial.** "Consists of the personal, internal, psychologically oriented aspects of individual being that dispose an individual to act or respond in certain ways" ... such as self, ego, and identity (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991, p. 163). Psychosocial also refers to an individual's specific orientation to the external world, relationships of self and society and what some refer to as personality (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991).

**Self-concept.** A person's self-perceptions formulated via experiences of their environment with significant others (Shavelson, Hubner, & Stanton, 1976; Shavelson, Burnstein, & Keesling, 1977). Self-concept is a relational term that may be utilized to denote one's judgements of their competence or skills relative to those of others in either or both academic or social areas (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991).

**Self-objectification.** When individuals get so accustomed to media objectification that they start to objectify themselves (Frederickson et al., 1998).

**Summary**

This study will focus on various aspects that may affect a male college student's perception of their body image and how they see themselves among their peers. This will be done by further understanding previously conducted research covering behavioral patterns relating to alcohol consumption, irregular exercise routines, perceptions of body image by sexual minority groups, analysis of images depicting a continuum of body types, and what support systems exist to influence a specific body image among men in college.

## **Chapter II**

### **Literature Review**

Where much of the research regarding body image and body dissatisfaction has covered women (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Bessenoff, 2006; Levitt, 2004; Lindner, Hughes, & Fahy, 2008; Schulken, Pinciario, Sawyer, Jensen, & Hoban 1997; Sides-Moore & Tochkov, 2011), it is important to note that the studies mentioned here do not provide many results regarding men's body image. While people see themselves as completing their physical development by their teenage years, the truth is that their body will continue to develop through death (Whitbourne & Skultety, 2002). This is important in attempting to understand how people react to changes in their bodies throughout adulthood.

According to Pascarella and Terenzini (1991), the transitional phase in a student's life from high school to college seems to be as difficult on students' social self-concepts (i.e. understanding others, social self-confidence, popularity, popularity with the opposite sex, leadership ability) as it is on their academic and coursework self-images. This can be supported by Lokitz and Sprandel (1976) who focused on a randomly selected sample population of 668 men and women of an incoming class at a medium-sized, private university in the Midwest. Lokitz and Sprandel (1976) gathered data through interviews as well as questionnaires to direct their study. They found that "students feel stripped of their social identities by the move to college" and by moving, to have "lost the social identity moorings afforded by parents' place in the community" and in the presence of their peers in their high school environment (p. 276).

According to Arnett (2000), late teenage men and women enter a stage of development known as emerging adulthood. This shift occurs, in Arnett's article, during ages 18-25 as men and women find themselves leaving dependency of their childhood and adolescence and not quite entering the enduring responsibilities that surround normative adulthood (2000). Arnett further suggests that it is at this stage in one's life where many different directions, such as love, work, and world views may be possible and that the future is uncertain. The relatively new period of life, emerging adulthood, is worthy of future scholarly interaction due to their period of heightened personal freedom and exploration. College men who transition from their high school programs and onward towards baccalaureate degrees fall into emerging adulthood and merit observation and contribution to their transition towards adulthood. There is a need to further understand how men view themselves and their maturation into adulthood, specifically as it relates to their sense of self.

It is important for scholars to not only be aware of how men perceive their own transitional development in college, but also how they can appropriately assist where needed. This study will focus on how men describe their behaviors related to health, how college men describe their body, and what social forces contribute to their perceived body image. This chapter will address health behavior topics such as exercise and working out, eating, and consumption behaviors that may exist as well as the development and concept of self. The various collegiate environments, how they are constructed, and identify what social forces may influence body image will also be addressed. Emphasis will center here on those who socially compare, where support of self comes from, and how the physical environment of college campuses plays an impactful role on interaction among peers and

perceptions of body image. Social comparison theory will also be explored as it impacts the perceptions of body image throughout college.

### **Health Behaviors**

Students who enter college may begin to start judging their physical appearance. For this reason, it is important to understand how college students exercise, create eating behaviors, and identify themselves throughout their development. Newly matriculated college students who begin adjusting their physical appearance in an effort to fit in may engage in unhealthy regimes such as excessive exercise programs and possibly the unhealthy consumption of food and/or alcohol (Pasman & Thompson, 1988). This transition to college doesn't have to create negatively associated behaviors as anticipated with the definition of self. College students may find that they will face positive interactions with peers and associate their new environment as one with possibility to grow and mature in a healthy manner. These possibilities may include identifying a healthy diet or caloric consumption routine, social engagement with new peers, or participating in appropriate exercise regimes focused on supplementing one's overall wellness. Feelings of being obligated to exercise to be thin or toned may be charged or influenced by perceived pressure from family, peers, or dating partners (Chalk, Miller, Roach & Schultheis, 2013).

**Working out.** Physical activity, healthy exercise, and mental health are an important part of student's personal well-being while in college. In the study conducted by Barry et al. (2013), males were just as likely as females to exercise for weight loss. Barry and his peer researchers used a national representative sample of college students from the American College Health Association's National College Health Assessment II



where their sample included 26,062 participants; 18,107 females and 7,955 males. Participants of their study were predominantly white (71%) and predominantly did not belong to a fraternity (9%). Barry and researchers found that both males and females were likely to exercise for weight loss. Blashill and Wilhelm (2014) conducted a study of 2,139 adolescent boys who were followed over 13 years into adulthood where data was collected in three waves: age 16, 22, and 29. Each of whom held a distorted body image at age 16, being either underweight or over weight. What they found was that those that had a distorted body image at age 16 also reported the highest levels of depression over time (Blashill & Wilhelm, 2014). Blashill & Wilhelm (2014) reported that depressive symptoms tended to flux over time in their study. Participants who, at age 22 in their longitudinal study, reported lower levels of depression than compared with data gathered at age 16 or 29 where the symptoms at age 29 were significantly lower than at age 16. This leads us to believe that through time as one's body image may change, and they may impact the way they feel about themselves as well. In the findings of their study, they noted that adolescent and young adult men who hold a distorted body image are more at risk for developing and maintaining elevated levels of depressive symptoms over a span of time.

***Obligatory exercise.*** Among the behaviors that may yield negative effects on college students is the amount or kind of obligatory exercise that they submit themselves to. Obligatory exercise is exercise that involves a subjective need to engage in repetitive exercise behaviors and carries negative emotionality associated with missing exercise sessions (Pasman & Thompson, 1988). Barry et al. noted in their 2013 study that there is likely to be a stronger association between exercise and weight loss behavior for females

than their male counterparts due to the fact that weight loss is more common among females. This is stated with the understanding that males may tend to be more aware and preoccupied with gaining muscle and losing fat at the same time. Bryant, Darkes, and Rahal (2012) found similar support for Barry et al. findings through a study focusing on 51 males and 223 females. Barry et al. further concluded that males tend to be preoccupied with gaining muscle mass and losing fat content.

Chalk, Miller, Roach, and Schultheis (2013) explored how obligatory exercise among men and women may provide insight to college and university administrators in developing programs in counseling departments. Chalk et al. studied 172 undergraduate students (141 female and 31 male) at a small liberal arts college in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States. Students may be more inclined to engage in exercise that is viewed as socially expected, which in turn, also may be repetitively done naturally to obtain the social expectation. This kind of exercise may lead to certain unhealthy behaviors such as obligatory exercise (Pasman & Thompson, 1988). According to Chalk et al. (2013), men were found to have increased body image pressure from dating partners, suggesting that they are more likely to engage in exercise that has been associated with psychological maladjustment to seek a more toned or fit physique and increased risk factors for eating disorders (Chalk et al., 2013). Chalk et al. stated that feeling obligated to exercise may be influenced by perceived pressure from family, peers, or dating partners to be toned or thin.

**Eating behaviors.** One prevailing belief is that upon entering college, there will be significant weight gain known as the *Freshman 15*, that is the student will gain weight in the first year and such a change in a student's body may impact them in many ways



(Simmons et al, 2011). The shift from high school to college can serve as a critical period as it is associated with several lifestyle changes that may lead to weight gain and changes in eating habits and increased alcohol consumption (Anderson, Shapiro, & Lundgren, 2003). Anderson et al. (2003) further suggested that terms such as *the freshman 15* add to the socially constructed belief that college is associated with weight gain, despite no published data to support this claim. While their 2003 study yielded statistically significant yet modest weight increases, one quarter of Anderson et al. participants gained at least 2.3 kg (5 lb.) during their first semester of college and classified them as overweight or obese. Unfortunately, this study did not include insight to frequency of dining hall use, eating off-campus, or with whom participants ate their food. These areas were taken into consideration for this study in order to contribute to the lacking information and detail. Whitbourne and Skultety (1998) stated that physical appearance of oneself provides external cues to the individual and others such as age and attractiveness. Body competence internally created is based on the sensations associated with aging such as feelings of agility, endurance, and power. These three components play a part in identity process theory where it is proposed that an adult's sense of identity is composed of feelings pertaining to physical, psychological, and social functioning (Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002, p. 85).

***Eating disorders.*** There is a heightened awareness of male eating disorders occurring whereas historically, shame and fear of public humiliation sent men with body image dissatisfaction and eating disorders underground (Corson & Anderson, 2002). With the more recent conversations surrounding men and their potential eating disorders, women are no longer alone in the conversation of thinness and sacrificing their emotional

productivity and well-being in search for ideal body image and shape (Corson & Anderson, 2002).

Body image disturbance stems as one of the most common clinical features that attributes to anorexia nervosa (Garner, 2002). Anorexia nervosa is the refusal to maintain a normal body weight as defined as 15 percent below normal weight for age and height and an intense fear of becoming fat (Grilo, Sinha, O'Malley, 2002). Bulimia nervosa is the recurrent episodes of binge eating or consuming unusually large amounts of food in a short period of time and a lack of control over eating. Stice (2002) suggested that bulimia nervosa is a prevalent and chronic psychiatric disorder that increases the risk for subsequent onset of obesity, substance abuse, and potential major depression. Bulimia nervosa may be also characterized as regular use of extreme weight control methods such as vomiting, abuse of laxatives, dieting pills or diuretics, severe fasting or dieting, and/or vigorous exercise (Grilo, Sinha, O'Malley, 2002). Binge eating disorder is the recurrent series of binge eating without weight control methods that are required for definition of bulimia nervosa (Grilo, Sinha, O'Malley, 2002). According to Corson and Andersen (2002), men are susceptible to a larger variety of weight concerns than females because the ideal in which men aspire is more complex than the thinness norm women embrace. This concept is supported by the idea that men want to change their weight as women do, but are often more preoccupied with body shape and muscularity (Pope, Phillips, & Olivardia, 2000).

Barry et al. (2013) identified that males were also engaging in weight-loss behaviors such as purging and restricting calories and were positively associated with consuming alcohol. Disordered eating and diet-related behaviors were found to co-occur

with alcohol use and alcohol abuse (Kelly-Weeder, 2011; Peralta, 2002). Results of the study by Barry et al. (2013) also showed associations among exercise weight loss behaviors and drinking were more strongly correlated among females as compared to their male counterparts. Females displayed a small negative association among exercise and drinking behaviors whereas males displayed a positive relationship between exercise and alcohol use.

**Consumption of alcohol.** Among the environments that are present during a college student's journey include those where alcohol is present or where it is being consumed. The consumer's awareness of the caloric intake when ingesting beverages that contain alcohol has become an interesting topic with addressing body image (Peralta, 2002). Results of a study of 78 undergraduate students (41 male and 37 female) regarding alcohol use and weight gain showed that a number of students, both men and women, revealed concerns around over-caloric content of alcohol to engage in diet-related behaviors of various severity (Peralta, 2002). Peralta (2002) also concluded in his study that both men and women are likely to be exposed to social pressure to resolve drinking norms along with the desire for a socially acceptable body image and shape. This finding may support the idea that health behaviors pertaining to consumption of alcohol and aspiring for a specific body image may be related as men and women may socially compare to those in their environments. An additional study by Giles, Champion, Sutfin, McCoy and Wagoner (2009) reported that 39% or 1,106 of the total 4,271 reported that they consumed alcohol within the past 30 days and decided to restrict food, fat and/or calories on days they plan to consume alcohol. Giles et al. further found that men and

women who restricted food, fat, or calories on drinking days were significantly associated with the increased likelihood of getting drunk in a typical week (2009).

Decisions such as restricting food on days when consumption of alcohol is a consideration can contribute to *Drunkorexia*. Drunkorexia is a nonmedical term that characterizes weight-conscious drinkers who enact compensatory behaviors such as caloric restriction and/or purging (including excessive exercise) to offset consumed alcohol-related calories (Barry et al., 2013). They concluded that weight loss behaviors such as purging, restricting calories, and general exercise were positively associated with alcohol consumption. Studies like this reveal further insight on gender-based differences in weight management behaviors between college men and women who consume alcohol. According to Chalk et. al (2013) men reported significantly higher alcohol use and were found to exercise more often than women. In his 2002 study, Peralta noted that some men and women would avoid excess calories by not consuming as much food on planned party nights. This affect almost frees the students to indulge in heavy alcohol use without the consequences of already having calories exist in their system (Peralta, 2002).

### **Personal Body Image**

The role of one's body image is such that it has the potential to dramatically influence our quality of life (Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002). From the early days of childhood, body image has affected emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in everyday life. Perhaps the most noted area of our life that body image impacts is in the relationships with one other, both public and intimate. One perspective on the impact our body image has on us is through the sociocultural perspective and our body attractiveness. From socially and culturally set ideals, body type and physical appearance has set the tone for contemporary

western cultures to idealize thinness for females and an average body type for males (Cash & Pruzinsky, 2002).

In understanding more about how one perceives oneself, it is important to first understand how people regard themselves. The three components of body image that require evaluation in adulthood are appearance, competence, and physical health (Whitbourne & Skultety, 2002). While the physical appearance allows for many important external cues to self and others, such as age and attractiveness, the internal feelings of body competence are based on the physical sensations of aging including agility, endurance, and power.

According to Whitborne & Skultety (2002), identity process theory suggests that adult's sense of identity is composed of feelings about physical, psychological, and social functioning. Through identity assimilation, the individual attempts to grasp a consistent view of self when interpreting age-related experience such as wrinkles in the skin and face. Identity assimilation does not raise much concern for the individual and does not cause a shift in identity. This experience is quite different from identity accommodation where the individual's age-related experience is overwhelming and causes a redefinition of the sense of self. Cash and Fleming (2002) suggest that regardless of one's actual physical characteristics, their own perceptions, beliefs, and feelings about their physical appearance might determine how they themselves believe others view them. If this is the case, Cash & Fleming further propose that a positive body image would cater towards social confidence and comfort, whereas negative body image perceptions would lead to social inhibition and anxiety.



**Social Forces Influencing Body Image**

There are many social forces that impact the way in which the college male may view his body. Initial interest includes the collegiate environment, the groups and organizations of which they are members in and the social forces that surround college men based on what was offered or provided to them. One must also build upon what wellness must look like for a typical college student as they progress and mature through college. Attempting to understand what wellness looks like for college students, focus is set on influences of body image such as media in society, sociocultural factors, and how individuals socially compare one-another.

**Physical environment.** It is the institution's responsibility to help students solve their adjustment concerns and challenges (Strange & Banning, 2001). It can be assumed, according to Strange and Banning (2001), "that institutions themselves bear responsibility for the design and creation of campus environments, arranged appropriately for meeting educational purposes" (p. 2). This being said, leads one to think that there are multiple means to how colleges and universities are set up to help educate and support the students it serves. Moos (1986) concluded that the environmental arrangement can serve as perhaps the most powerful technique for influencing human behavior and that every institution in our society has a set of conditions that it hopes to maximize specific types of behavior and steer certain directions of personal growth. Specifically, colleges and universities create certain conditions to attract, satisfy, and retain their students for purposes of challenging them to develop specific qualities of the educated student including the capacity for complex critical reasoning, communication, leadership, sense

of identity and purpose, an appreciation for differences, and a commitment to lifelong learning (Strange & Banning, 2001).

The campus' physical environment is a vitally important feature that influences one's attraction to and overall satisfaction with the institution they are at (Strange & Banning, 2001). Here exists the literal and physical condition, design, and layout where students interact, learn, and develop. Regardless if the physical aspects of a campus environment are synthetic or natural, they offer many possibilities for human response where it may create some behaviors more probable than others (Strange & Banning, 2001). On college campuses, these aspects may include how students navigate through the campus quad, through the dining center to their residence hall, or even their access to their classroom. Emphasis on the physical environment such as the campus recreation center, health services office, and intramural and sports club facilities may be campus locations where students may render their behaviors or body ideals more than other. For example, a student who does not regularly visit the campus recreation center due to barriers to act sees images provided by the university of men and women who fit the socially constructed ideal body type prominently displayed. Depending on how this student generates their body image and satisfaction of self may drive the individual to exercise in excess to attain that ideal.

**Human aggregate.** Another portion of the collegiate environment where students develop is among themselves; the human aggregate. Here, the environment is made up of the characteristics of the people who inhabit and interact within their day-to-day activities (Holland, 1973). This large, yet delicate space allocated to students in college also carries very important social self-image responsibilities as they transition from high school. For

many, this transition is an exciting one filled with great anticipation, however, they may face the darker hours of social self-concept construction where they yearn for the dawn of a more positive social self-image (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). According to Pascarella (1985), students may experience this transition of positive social self-image around the end of their sophomore year in college.

Perhaps one of the more important relationships that students can have in college is with their peers and university staff, who are with them through this transition. Levine and Smolak (2002) suggest that institutions should work on designating and training a resource person to assume responsibility for the oversight of health promotions in schools. These resource person(s) should facilitate discussions of key stakeholders (parents, teachers, students and community professionals) to identify goals surrounding health promotion ideals such as body image, nutrition, and physical activity.

Sheldon (2013) explored the influence of family communication against peer pressure on young men and women's perceived body image where the researchers asked how communication makes young adults less happy with their bodies and more apt to developing an eating disorder. This study also looked at whether or not participants are more influenced by peers or family in regards to eating behaviors. Two hundred eighty-three students (161 women, 122 men) participated in the study where the age ranged from 18 to 37 ( $M = 20.3$ ). Participants were asked to complete a questionnaire on their parents' communication style and their own perceived body-image. This questionnaire asked females items on body satisfaction and drive for thinness while the male questionnaire asked items on body satisfaction only. Sheldon used The Revised Family Communication Pattern (RFCP) to measure family conversation and conformity orientation which asks



respondents to agree or disagree with 26 statements. Results revealed that women in the sample perceived mothers to be more conversation orientated than men. Men perceive their mothers to be more conformist than women. Men and women equally rated mothers and fathers to be conformist. Researchers concluded that mothers emphasize conversation orientation over conformity when it comes to body image. In addition, results suggested that peer influence emerged as the most important predictor of a women's body dissatisfaction and the second most important predictor of their desire to lose body weight (Sheldon, 2013).

***Social comparison.*** Social comparison theory defines how individuals are driven to compare themselves to objective standards when available, specifically select groups like their peers (Bessenoff, 2006; Bucchianeri, Serrano, Pastula, & Corning, 2014). Bessenoff (2006) suggested in her study that social comparison mediates the relationship between the think-ideal exposure and outcomes that exist. Through review of the literature done regarding body image as well as college students, the researcher believes that social comparison theory as cited by Bucchianeri (2014), Sheldon (2013), and Festinger (1954) will be helpful in understanding how individuals compare their body images. This may help explain how some college men perceive their body image among their peers. In a study conducted by Mayo and George (2014), their goal was to understand how individuals perceive themselves in regards to body image and look at the risk of eating disorders in college males. Their study utilized the self-discrepancy theory where there is a discrepancy between the current and the ideal body image of the student. This discrepancy is also known as body image dissatisfaction which has been associated with an increased risk for contributing to eating disorders. Mayo & George (2014)

concluded in their study that images published in magazines such as *Cosmopolitan*, *Men's Health*, *Men's Fitness*, and *Muscle & Fitness* contributed to a different kind of body image. They found that these images were more muscular than the ideal male body type illustrated in women's magazines, where they suggest that gender-specific media establish disconnect between the preferences of one gender and personal desires of another. Examples of published body image by media forces may add to how college men may socially compare their own body images towards what is acceptable for muscularity or fatness.

In her book, *Survival of the Prettiest*, Etcoff (1999) states that male appearance has been important from an early age onward and has created a dominating hierarchy among boys. A fundamental example can be seen either on the playground or at camp where boys select teams to play. Participants at a young age more times than not, select the "best looking, most athletic boy who shows the most mature physique" as the team or pack leader (Corson & Andersen, 2002, p. 194). When observing masculinity among men, male participants are found to be more preoccupied with gaining muscle and losing fat while also perceiving body image and weight by having larger arms and a 'V' shaped body (Breslow & Smothers, 2005; Parks & Read, 1997; Simmons et al., 2011; Tiggemann, Martins, & Kirkbride, 2007). One example of social comparison theory is gender role conflict (GRC) theory. The theory of masculine GRC helps explain "how sexism and gender role socialization interact to produce oppression" (O'Neil, Good, & Holmes, 1995, p.166). O'Neil (2008) states that gender role conflict is a difficult, multidimensional construct of unconscious phenomenon created when masculine gender roles deviate from norms. The components of GRC include: success, power, and

competition; restricted emotionality; restricted affectionate behavior between men; and conflict between work and family relationships. Men may use aggressive means or overdevelop muscles to achieve some masculine ideal in an attempt to gain an ideal body image (Pompper, 2010). Schwartz et al. (2010) report that aspects of gender role conflict were significant predictors of self-objectification in males. They concluded that an "autonomous sense of self and not being overly emotional reactive in relation to others are protective factors against body-image concerns and self-objectification in men" (Schwartz, 2010, p.220). Further implications of their study indicated that counselors that treat men with body-image concerns should focus more on their interpersonal relations with others.

Another theory that will support the framework of this study is the objectification theory by Fredrickson & Roberts (1997). Objectification theory is used as a way to help explain potential judgment of one's body image. Through internalizing the cultural standard of attractiveness to one's perceived body image, the individual may monitor their body more and alter how they look rather than how they feel or operate. As a result, individuals who feel negatively about their self-objectification may be subject to self-body shaming.

Novella, Gosselin, and Danowski (2015) reported potential patterns in perceptual discrepancies among ideal, current, and attractive body images. Novella, Gosselin, and Danowski studied 348 undergraduates from a private Catholic university who assessed current versus ideal body images in addition to attractiveness of body types. Using continua of both thin to obese and thin to muscular figures constructed by an artist, researchers used a scale called the Presentation of Images on a Continuum Scale (PICS).

Men chose a more muscular ideal than their current bodies but the difference between muscular ideal types and figure others found more attractive were not as significant. The researchers concluded that method to promoting positive social norms is to correct misperceptions of popular behaviors which would help college counselors and administrators to serve their student body. Using the PCIS, these university staff can gauge their students' ideal versus current versus their attractive body types and support them in developing a realistic image of self. Institution counselors and administrators can consider using both male and female images to make the PICS more inclusive to address body dissatisfaction for not only the drive for thinness but also muscle dysmorphia (Novella, Gosselin, & Danowski, 2015).

In their 2014 study, researchers Daniel, Martens, and Bridges looked to develop and validate a form of measurement to assess self-objectification specifically in men known as the Male Assessment of Self-Objectification (MASO). They believed that this measure focused more on the appearance items related to muscularity rather than measuring the amount of body fat, as well as the body parts important to men. Through three different studies within this one study, researchers searched for the development and validation of a version of the Self-Objectification Questionnaire (SOQ) named as the MASO guide by current definitions of self-objectification theory and qualitative studies regarding body image in men. The MASO utilized a 7-point Likert-type scale where participants were asked to rate body attributes according to the level of importance in the way they view their body and its abilities. For the three separate sub-studies, men over the age of 18 in the United States were the target population and were recruited to complete an online survey from a diverse medium-sized metropolitan university in the

southern United States and via social networking sites. This study indicated that men may exhibit more complex reasons for possessing certain attitudes and behaviors in regards to their appearance than women. Daniel, Bridges, and Martens suggest in their study that self-objectification can be useful in explaining the heightened drive for muscularity in men. This is stated with the understanding that it is unclear if the SOQ measures its dimensions the same for men and women. Daniel, Bridges, and Martens therefore stated the importance of instruments to be geared toward understanding the development of body image in men to demonstrate the relationship of drive for muscularity being the most appropriate male body image construct, supported by other researchers (Cafri & Thompson, 2004; McCreary & Sadava, 2001; McCreary & Sasse, 2000). Holding a better understanding of how male body image is constructed and how it occurs, may provide better insight to how it can be addressed in society among certain populations.

***Social media.*** Chalk, Miller, Roach, and Schultheis (2013) found that women reported more Western attitudes regarding appearance as well as perceived pressure of body image from family and media compared to men. While many forms of social media exist, media in this research revolves around entertainment and marketing. Social networking giant services such as Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, YikYak, and Instagram may play a large role in how college men and women identify as socially acceptable body image ideals. They concluded that the internalization of Western ideals for thinness for college women and perceived body image pressure from dating partners for men are highlights of their study and are important for counseling centers. Chalk et al. (2013) stated that counselors should take proper steps to lessen the influence of peer pressure on perceived body image for male undergraduates.



Among the many mediums of media in today's society, magazine articles, television shows, and advertisements have created a social context that may contribute to body dissatisfaction and disordered eating in girls and women (Spettigue & Henderson, 2004). Supporting this claim, according to Anderson and DiDomenico (1992) women's magazines contained 10.5 times as many diet promotions as men's magazines. As television commercials for diet foods and products has increased, the body size of Playboy centerfolds, Miss America contestants, fashion models and female actresses have decreased all while the weight of the average North American woman has increased (Spettigue and Henderson, 2004). Not only does the media glorify thinner images, they emphasize the importance of appearances in general (Spettigue and Henderson, 2004). This may build upon a conflicting message for self-control, confidence in self, and personal self-esteem.

**Organizational environment.** Where the physical and human characteristics meet next is the organizational structures related to the purposes and goals of the college and how it serves its students. In the historical perspective, America's colleges and universities have had an educational and social mission to educate their students in a sense that extends beyond the cognitive and intellectual development of students (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). In the shift to more modern education, Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) further suggest that this broad mission has set education to provide students an:

increased self-understanding; expansion of personal, intellectual, cultural, and social horizons and interest; liberation from dogma, prejudice, and narrow-mindedness; development of personal moral and ethical standards; preparation for

useful and productive employment and membership in a democratic society; and the general enhancement of the quality of graduates' post college lives (p. 162).

With this mission now refined to include many different facets, it becomes clear that America's colleges and universities are being charged to provide much more than an academic experience. Previous research supports claims that college health practitioners should be aware of the interplay of alcohol use/abuse, disordered eating, and exercise that may take place among college students (Barry et al., 2013). Through further investigation of research on the topic of body image among college-aged students, most studies have been conducted, focused, and directed around college-aged women. Research on perceived body image among college men would provide student affairs professionals and university administration a better idea of how they can focus their efforts and serve this specific group of students.

**Constructed structure.** The student's collective perceptions or constructions of the context and culture of the educational setting begin to take place in this final structure. How individuals perceive, construct, and evaluate their environment is due to whether or not they are satisfied and stable with the setting as well as if the environment is attractive to their needs (Strange & Banning, 2001). These perceptions of the environment become the individual's reality which begins to create an approach to the environment within which they live and interact. This phenomenological interaction allows university officials and staff the basis to understand and predict behavior of the students creating these realities (Strange & Banning, 2001). How university students and staff members in residence halls, student life office, and other areas of the university set the tone and social environment may play a crucial role in how their student leaders

interact in those environments. These supportive administrative roles on campus serve as the first step in creating a healthy, safe, and productive environment for students to develop during their college years.

Together, the four sets of environmental components-physical, human aggregate, organizational/symbolic, and constructed-create the various sources of influence on student's behavior (Strange & Banning, 2001). Understanding and recognizing these components as well as their dynamics is a crucial step to understanding how they may be shaped to help students achieve educational purposes. The involvement on campus through student organizations, fraternities and sororities, athletics, residence hall associations, and other clubs play a crucial role in the development of the collegiate environment. This study's aim is to gather a better understanding and foothold on how college men in some of these campus involvements utilize their environment and create perceptions of self. In addition to inquiry on how college men see themselves and their body, further investigation will exist in the environments that they participate in and with whom they identify with in those environments.

### **Summary**

The aforementioned research provides a foundation for the researcher's future study to locate and reveal areas that are missing regarding undergraduate men on college campuses. This study will benefit those who work with college students from various areas of the institution. Understanding how an individual interacts in regard to their masculinity, or lack-there-of, and their perceived body image will help in providing appropriate environments where students can grow a healthy perspective of themselves.



### **Chapter III**

#### **Methodology**

The purpose of this study was to focus on the perceptions of body image among college men attending a rural, mid-sized Midwestern institution. This study was designed to better understand how men perceive their bodies, given various insight into their journey to the end-part of their collegiate careers. Insight on what participants do during a typical day was retrieved and sought as interest including any physical activities that they engaged in, where they ate and who they ate with, how do they described their behaviors related to their health, social forces that they identified influencing their body image, and how they described their body.

#### **Design of Study**

Through a qualitative study, the researcher gathered information from these students to answer questions surrounding their experiences, or lack-there-of, with their body image. Qualitative research serves to aid the researcher in understanding an issue from the individual's perspective (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). A qualitative approach is necessary for this research due to the nature of asking questions that allow the respondent to appropriately self-reflect on how they analyze their perceptions of their body. The researcher conducted nine individual interviews which took place with different students across campus: three Division I male athletes, three fraternity males, and three males who are not involved in either Division I athletics nor fraternity life. These different backgrounds on-campus aided the researcher in offering a diversified approach to students on campus and will supplement future research on similar topic matter.

**Location**

The site for this study took place in a rural, mid-sized Midwestern public university with an enrollment of over 7,400 students. According to the Office of Student Programs and Fraternity & Sorority Programs fall 2016 semester membership report, there are over 460 members of social Greek-letter fraternities. The university's athletic department reported having just under 280 male student-athletes for the fall 2016 semester.

**Participants**

In order for the subjects to participate in this study, all individuals were matriculated and active undergraduate students between the ages of 18-25 and who identified as males. Because this study was looking at men's personal body image as it related to all male communities, it was important that the participants were members of a social Greek-letter fraternity, on a Division I male athletic team, or involved elsewhere on-campus. The researcher contacted the athletic department, fraternity and sorority programs, as well as other student affairs directors to attain a list of male students who qualified to participate in the study. Participants were contacted via university email account at random to voluntarily participate in this study. Individuals who were selected were interviewed by the researcher. Interviews were audio recorded. Transcription of the interviews followed, where participant's names and identities were reassigned and protected.

Nine men who self-identified as male, were junior or senior standing undergraduates participated in this study. Of these nine participants, three identified as fraternity men, three as male Division I Athletes, and three as male students who were not

involved in either a social Greek-letter fraternity or a Division I athletic program. There was only one instance where a participant indicated their involvement outside of a social Greek-letter fraternity and/or a Division I athletic program but later revealed their affiliation to a social Greek-letter fraternity in their interview.

**Cole.** Cole grew up in a large Midwestern metropolitan city and he identified as African American. Cole was a senior at the university where he studied Communication Studies with a concentration in Corporate and a minor in Business Administration. While attending the university, Cole lived solely on-campus in two different housing options with male suitemates. At the university, Cole devoted much of his time to his National Pan-Hellenic Council social Greek-letter fraternity as well as to a college-based military officer training program hosted on-campus. While Cole enjoyed his undergraduate experience in his fraternity, he also found time to socialize with others with whom he lived in the same residence halls on-campus.

**Andrew.** Andrew grew up in a small Midwestern rural town and identified himself as Caucasian. He was enrolled as a senior studying Music with a minor in Business Administration. Andrew has lived off-campus in a house that his parent's own but do not live with Andrew. During his time living off-campus, Andrew lived with different roommates from year-to-year. During Andrew's first year he lived with his cousin, during his second year he added a friend from high school. During his third year he lived with a friend from high school and two other individuals. During his fourth year with two individuals he went to high school with. While attending the university, he was involved in his Interfraternity Council social Greek-letter fraternity where he served as chapter President for two years and as chapter secretary for one year. In addition to

joining his social Greek-letter fraternity his first semester at college, he also became a member of an on-campus music fraternity. Andrew has served as a drum major for two years as well as well as serving as a Senior Assistant for the university's marching band.

**Peter.** Peter grew up in a small Midwestern rural town and he identified as Caucasian. He was a senior at the university where he studied Biological Sciences with a minor in Chemistry. While attending the university, Peter lived on-campus for the first two years, then moved off-campus for the last two years. As an on-campus resident, Peter didn't get along with either one of his sets of roommates. The first year he lived off-campus he got along with his roommates, despite butting heads occasionally. During the year in which the study occurred, Peter lived with two females and got along the best out of all of his roommate pairings. Throughout his time enrolled at the university, Peter always had roommates. During his time at the university, Peter devoted much of his time to his Division I athletic team, the student athletic advisory committee serving a term as President, and to a national health pre-professional honor society serving a term as President. In addition, he has been involved with a national biology honor society serving a term as President and Treasurer of an on-campus residence hall.

**Ian.** Ian grew up in a small Midwestern rural town and identified himself as Caucasian. He was enrolled as a junior studying Accounting with a minor in Finance. Ian lived off-campus with his parents since being enrolled at the university. During his time living off-campus, Andrew lived with his mother, father, and younger sister. While attending the university, he was involved in the university's student government where served as the Vice President of Academic Affairs, and Program Specialist for the

university's orientation office. In addition, he served as a campus tour guide for the office of admissions.

**Nathan.** Nathan grew up in a suburb of a large Midwestern metropolitan city and he identified as Latino and Mexican. He transferred to this university as a junior from a community college and was a senior studying Psychology with a minor in Political Science. While attending the university for his first year, he lived on-campus with three other males. During the year of the study, Nathan lived off-campus with one of his previous roommates. During his time at the university, Nathan devoted time to his Interfraternity Council social Greek-letter fraternity, Student Secular Alliance, student Democrats organization, and a political science organization.

**Andy.** Andy grew up in a large Midwestern metropolitan city and identified himself as Mexican. He transferred to this university as a junior from a community college and was enrolled as a junior studying Computer Science and Math. Andy lived on-campus in a unit without a roommate where he paid for a double occupancy unit and lived in that unit as a single. During the year of the study, he was not involved in any extracurricular activities, however, he planned to get involved in the computer programming club the following year.

**Max.** Max grew up in a small Midwestern rural town and he identified as Caucasian. He currently was a junior studying Theatre Arts and Business Management. While attending the university for his first year, he lived on-campus with one other male and for the past two years, Max lived on-campus alone as a resident assistant. During his time at the university, Max devoted much of his time to being a resident assistant, being actively involved in university theatre department productions, the recruitment and



retention committee representative for the university theater department, and an on-campus theatre fraternity serving one term as President. In addition, Max has served as the registration chair for the state's residence hall association conference.

**Harry.** Harry grew up in a mid-sized Midwestern city and identified himself as African American. He was enrolled as a senior studying Exercise Science with a minor in Psychology. Harry lived on-campus his first year with one other roommate who played with him on the university football team. Following the first year on-campus, Harry moved off-campus to live with other male roommates until the time of the study where he lives with his wife and another female who is also on the same athletic team. Harry devoted much of his time to his current Division I athletic team, men's track & field, despite being recruited to the university for another Division I athletic team, football. For both Division I athletic teams, Harry served as team captain. He also was involved in the officer candidate school serving as a squad and fire team leader, the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, and the American College of Sports Medicine.

**Nick.** Nick grew up in a suburb of a large Midwestern metropolitan city and he identified as Caucasian. He was a senior studying Marketing. While attending the university for his first year, Nick lived on-campus in a single occupancy unit and for the two years following lived off-campus with other male roommates. Nick devoted much of his time to the two Division I athletic teams he participated in; men's track & field and men's cross country. In addition, Nick was involved in the university's student marketing organization where he served as President for one term.



**Instrument**

The interview protocol (Appendix B) that the researcher developed allowed for interview participants to share their perceptions of their own body-image, health behaviors, and asked to describe their body. Through creating the interview questions, the researcher worked on ensuring that the questions were paired with the research questions and allowed the participants to share further details without prompting a forced response. The questions were formulated to allow the participant to provide in-depth details about themselves and their body image

**Data Collection**

In conducting the interviews with respondents on campus, the researcher took appropriate measures to maintain a non-hostile or uncomfortable setting. In order to maintain appropriate safety of the participants as well as the researcher in gathering data, the researcher made sure to allow respondents to answer to any and all questions while being audio recorded. At the time of the interview, only the researcher and the interviewee were present and the audio recording was saved to a memory card on the researcher's computer. The audio recording was then transcribed to a word processing file. The names of the participants were changed immediately to a pseudo name to protect their identity. The computer of the researcher remained under lock where the researcher was the only individual who had access to files therein.

Transcriptions were created for each interview and accessible for review purposes only with the thesis advisor, one other graduate student in the same graduate program, and the respective interviewees. These individuals reviewed the transcriptions was for validity purposes of accurately recording responses. Privacy was of most importance to

the researcher as the topic of body image of men may have been a difficult and potentially embarrassing topic.

### **Treatment and Analysis of Data**

Each interview conducted was audio recorded and then transcribed by the researcher. Transcriptions provided the researcher with the exact words spoken by the participants that also were coded as part of the analysis. Code in qualitative inquiry is typically a short phrase or word that represents a summative, essence-capturing, salient, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based data (Saldaña, 2015). Any and all printed research documents were locked in a safe cabinet where the researcher was the only one with access. Audio recordings of the interviews remained under lock on the researcher's computer during the research process. Through analysis of interview data, coding of the responses gathered from the interviews allowed for conclusive statements across study participants.

### **Summary**

The researcher addressed the proper avenues in preparation for data collection. As previously stated, the researcher held the confidentiality of the participants in highest regard due to the research topic's delicate approach. As mentioned, the purpose of this study was to focus on the perceptions of body image among college men. This study was designed to better understand how men perceive their bodies. This research is necessary and important to contribute to the current literature that covers the surface of body image perceptions among college males attending a college or university. This information will allow for future researchers to obtain themes of results in addition to build upon the growing research population of college men.



## **Chapter IV**

### **Results**

The purpose of this study was to look at how college men perceived their body image and what influences this perception. Participants were offered to contribute to this study by providing feedback to a series of questions presented by the researcher.

Feedback was provided pending response questions regarding growing up, current role at the university, descriptions of specific behaviors that they participated in or observed others partaking, how they view their own bodies, among other descriptive prompts. This chapter will focus on the main themes that participants identified in their responses and help provide answers to the research questions:

1. How do men describe their behaviors related to health?
2. What social forces (i.e. media, social media, peer groups, etc.) do male college students identify as having the influence on how they perceive their body image?
3. How do college men describe their body?

#### **Descriptions of Undergraduate College Male Behaviors Related to Health**

Several factors presented themselves as participants of this study talked about their behaviors related to health. Participants were asked about how they navigate food and meals, alcohol behaviors, and what kind of physical activity they may engage in. They were asked to speak about their behaviors and routine and asked to share what that looks like. The themes that emerged from this included food and meals, alcohol, structured and unstructured physical activity, finding balance and routine and are described below.

**Food and meals.** All nine participants shared their experiences as they relate to food and meals. Participants shared insight in to their behavior revolving around individual interaction with food and meals, which varied from on-campus dining halls to off-campus housing arrangements and local eateries. Further details were specifically shared regarding preparation and shopping as well as consumption of food and meals. Participants also shared that they may gain access to food items or shop for groceries with others such as roommates, athletic sports team members, fraternity members, and other individuals. Conversation surrounding social forces and how they influenced their perceptions of body image are covered following this section as it pairs with the second research question.

***Preparation and shopping.*** When participants were asked about how they gain access to food, they spoke about shopping for food items either alone or with others. Participants identified various behaviors that were found to be factors in preparing a meal as well as shopping for food items. Cole, Andrew, Peter, Ian, Nathan, Harry, and Nick live off-campus while Andy and Max live on-campus. Cole, who is a member of a National Pan-Hellenic Council social Greek-letter fraternity, talked about how he would watch YouTube videos on what to eat or certain substances to consume following exercise. Andrew reported that he loves cooking with people when they are around, Nathan stated his interaction with meal preparation, “I get groceries and I just cook. I actually enjoy cooking; I feel it is like my relax time. It is like reading, it is just my time to relax put some music on while I am cooking.” Andrew also talked about preparing and eating certain foods:

Food for me is interesting just because I am a vegetarian so my eating habits kind of vary a little bit with a lot of the people that I hang out with. Most of my friends are not vegetarians so I usually kind of have to watch what I eat and kind of figure out what I am going to do for meals.

When asked about preparing for a meal, Nathan, a member of an Interfraternity Council Greek-letter organization reported, "I try not to spend or eat as much because it's much cheaper to eat at home and cook a home meal and it's healthier for you than it is to eat out." Nathan continued that when he goes shopping in preparation for his meal that he will try to spread out the meals by purchasing pre-packaged and ready-to-serve options. Both Andrew and Nathan reported that they have a positive food preparation and cooking experience.

Division I male athletes Peter, Harry, and Nick reported that they prepare and shop for meals in their apartment or home. Peter, a men's swimming athlete, shared:

I only go to the store like once every three months. Then again, I am busy and I probably do not eat correctly, how as I should, so like there are days where I am like, 'I might not eat' or 'I will just have an apple or banana.' I do not go through food as much as my roommates so I can get away with like going every three months. It is just because I am not consuming a lot so I refuse to go and buy more food when I still have stuff in the cabinet or the fridge or stuff like that. I only go when I do not have anything.

Harry, a men's track & field athlete, shared that he shops with his wife for groceries, and expressed that "I keep in my mind healthier options that I can be eating" while preparing meals. Nick reported cooking almost all of his meals in his home and



“really making it a point last year to have leftovers all of the time so I didn’t have to cook every day.” Nick also stated, “I do consider health when I am shopping for food but I also consider taste” and reasons behind choosing to cook for himself and how frequent:

Part of it was money, at the time for anybody, but part of it as well was being healthy and I looked at it as a challenge and like, ‘let’s not eat out unless I am eating with friends.’ For the Most part, I would say five to six meals a week I cooked for myself.

Involved on campus in the university’s student government and orientation office, Ian lives with his family off-campus where his parents provide groceries and prepare meals for him. Despite having the majority of his meals prepared for him at his parent’s house, Ian shared that when he does eat out, he keeps the cost in mind:

I am kind of a penny pincher so wherever the deal is, is where I am going to eat. I am not picky so if you know they had a deal on two-dollar curry, I would go and eat it; I follow the money.

Participants Andy and Max, who both live on campus, reported that they ate most of their meals in the dining halls but also sparingly shopped for groceries and prepared food that can be cooked in a microwave in their on-campus room. Andy shared his grocery shopping preferences:

It depends on what I want. I will buy a box of cereal so I want cereal for the week and of course milk and bread to make sandwiches for lunch sometimes. It depends on the time too. For me, it depends on what is easy to cook in the dorm and what is easy to make.

Andy expressed, “I like to grill, but I have to go upstairs.” Andy further explained his situation, “I know we do have a kitchenette upstairs but it is a little difficult to get up there.” Andy eluded that the inconvenience may lead to his lack of desire to cook or prepare meals in his residence hall:

I guess just the hassle to have to go upstairs and then bring your food down or if you have to go up and then down. It is a hassle to the point that is not worth it anymore. We are not wasting, but it feels like a waste of time to go up there and prepare food and then come down.

Max, a resident assistant, utilizes the free meal plan to eat on-campus and occasionally ventures off-campus. Max does have access to a kitchenette, but does not prepare food often:

I have made like cookies and like grilled cheese and stuff there. We did make soup, but I do not keep many utensils in my room and they have some at the front desk. I just do not usually make time to make things.

***Consumption.*** All of the participants were asked about their food consumption and expressed specific food consumption behaviors and how they navigate those situations. Some spoke about having busy schedules and how food becomes a low priority, and they will often skip a meal or two. Others spoke about how they are aware of their food consumption based on its impact on their athletic skill and body ability. In addition, others talked about eating regularly and being somewhat aware of their consumption.

Peter reported that he is busy with his multiple involvements that there might be days that he tells himself that he might not eat or have a fruit as a snack. Peter knows that he probably does not eat correctly or how he should. Peter stated:

I am just super busy and it is like the last thing that is on my mind because I am trying to get everything done or I get to the point as if I do not want to cook so I will just 'eh, I will just eat tomorrow.' I will just push it off."

He continued to explain the transitioning away from being a Division I male athlete:

I am going to have to watch what I eat and how much I eat just because working out for twenty plus hours a week, I could pretty much eat whatever I wanted and maintained where I was. Now that I do not, I do have to eat healthier and I cannot just like eat out whenever I want. I am not one of those people who have a high metabolism and can eat whatever, whenever, and what amount of quantity and just stay the same.

Ian receives most of his meals and food from his parent's home off-campus where he usually eats breakfast and dinner but may get lunch near the university. He shared a little bit about his consumption methods during the day:

I could skip a meal and oh well, and it does not really effect, as I am not sick, it does not really affect life. I figured I could run off a little less food now. I eat; I get full faster so instead of eating two helpings, maybe I will only eat a helping and be, 'okay, I am done.' I used to snack too, so if I eat a snack, I have to be careful. If I eat a snack, I may not be hungry for my next meal. I don't know, I

used to eat a lot and I still I exercise so I don't know if it is just my metabolism is actually slowing down or if it is just one of those mental things.

Ian shared food preferences that he has to be mindful of:

I have kind of a sensitive stomach so I cannot eat...I can eat anything but there are certain things like I can eat that but I am not going to feel good afterwards. I go for the lighter foods, for sure.

Cole shared, "I knew I could eat anything I wanted because later on I knew I was working out that day." Similar to Cole, Andrew was also aware of eating food and associating it with exercise by stating, "whenever I am eating fast food I would run a lot more tonight after this or I probably shouldn't drink at this party tonight just because all of the calories." In addition, Andrew reported eating more with others than alone in sharing:

It kind of depends on the nature of the meal or kind of how busy we are as if we actually eat it at the kitchen table or if we just kind of eat it in front of the TV.

Harry is aware of his eating preferences and his daily exercise as a men's track & field team athlete:

I am trying to be more focused on not eating like unhealthy food. For all of the activity that I do in the day, that burger will meet or fall within how many calories that I need, so it wouldn't be that bad but I am just thinking I am going to try and do something else. Sometimes I tend to fall back to what I know because that is what I am more comfortable with, so I will say, 'I won't get a burger' and try not getting a burger and I will end up getting a burger.

For his athletic sport, Harry is focusing on eating more carbohydrates to use as the main energy store. Nick reported the most regimented routine compared to both Peter and Harry. As mentioned before, Nick prepares for the most part all of his meals at his off-campus home where he also eats breakfast, lunch, and dinner. He shared a little into his eating preferences as a men's cross country and track & field athlete:

We have a race tomorrow, and it is tomorrow night, so I still was not concerned with what I was eating today. The other dietary restriction I would say that I have is that we have practice at 3:30 PM. I make it a rule that I typically don't eat much of anything, maybe a granola bar but much of anything three hours leading up to a run.

Nick further shared that he is not concerned with the quantity of consumption: I never worry about the quantity I eat because I never been able to really gain weight. Last year I was hurt and I gained about 12 pounds but other than that, I lost that and now I cannot physically gain any more. Just because the work load.

Andy and Max both predominantly eat in the dining halls; however, the difference between the two is that Max shared his minimal dieting experience stating, "dieting, I am not good at it. Only because I haven't really taken the time to look into nutritional facts and a lot of that kind of stuff." During his first year, Max shared that he usually ate off-campus at fast food restaurants where he "packed the freshman forty on real fast." Max also added that while he does not always eat breakfast, he would eat lunch in the dining hall with the meal plan he is provided being a resident assistant for the university.

**Alcohol.** As part of understanding participants body image they were asked to speak about their habits related to alcohol consumption. All nine participants expressed

their experiences, or lack thereof, as they relate to alcohol. Participants shared insight on their behavior revolving around individual interaction with alcohol, which, similar to food and meals, varied from on-campus dining halls to off-campus housing arrangements and local eateries. Specific details were shared regarding consumption of alcohol whereas social engagement with alcohol is covered later.

***Consumption.*** Participants were asked to describe their alcohol consumption behaviors while attending the university. Specifically, participants were asked to share what consuming an alcoholic beverage looked like, where they typically go, how often, how much they consume, and how their behavior may relate to their peers. While responses pertaining to consuming alcohol exist here, further comments to consuming socially with others is covered later under social influences.

When asked about his consumption of alcohol, Cole reported regular consumption behavior: “Oh man, drink every day. Almost every day of the week. I would say it started Thursday, would not end maybe Sunday. I built up a super-high tolerance.” He further shared that on an average night, he would drink a bottle or “a fifth” of alcohol, which equates to 1/5 of a gallon or 750 ml. Cole shared more on his consumption of alcohol:

I drank anything that was given to me. Of course, my tolerance was higher, but I would definitely be messed up and then regret it the next day. It used to be that way that such and such is giving me a drink, I’m going to drink it. Then it got to the point where it was like, ‘you know, I am going to drink because I want to get messed up.’

When asked about his alcohol consumption, Andrew shared that he commonly drinks around others and that his consumption behavior ranges. He expressed that “the



only time that I really drank a ridiculous amount is usually on a celebratory occasion like my birthday this past summer, of course, I had a lot then.” When asked if he would alter his food consumption to account for alcohol consumption, Andrew reported:

Myself, I have done that a few times where I say, ‘oh well, I definitely want to get drunk at this party tonight so I am just going to not eat dinner, it will be fine.’ In addition, I end up regretting it because I am just starving after so I just eat while I am drunk and I definitely see that occur with quite a bit of people. I have done it a few times but not frequent enough.

Nathan reported that his alcohol consumption is dependent on his work schedule. According to Nathan, “if I drink, it is going to be on Friday because then you are hungover on Saturday, at least you have Saturday to recover, go to the gym, and go sweat it out.” He continued to share that has chosen to exercise or not eat in order to gain the effects of alcohol for comfort:

I guess I could say I have done that, I have not stuffed my face but that is more of a comfort thing because beer kind of bloats you and I am not going to be at the party like bloated and have to go to the bathroom all of the time.

In describing his alcohol consumption behavior, Nathan reported a specific routine that he follows in occasions that he consumes alcohol, which according to him, is on average eight drinks a session:

I would be out drinking and I would like come home and I will come and have two or three bottles of water before I go to bed and I will have something light (to eat) ... and go to bed. I wake up fine, but I think that is genetically or something because I do not know. I feel like maybe higher tolerance genetically maybe.

Nothing like that, I am just saying I feel like I have that. Most of the time, I try to stay away from beer, I will try to get tequila or something lower in calorie or liquor is clear and isn't going to give you as many calories that the beer does. Tequila has a little less, nothing crazy.

Peter stated that his alcohol consumption depends on "how much money I want to put into it" while he also shared an experience he had last year:

I have to be careful because last year on my twenty-first, I drank excessively and two days later I put myself in the hospital because I went into atrial fibrillation, so my heart wasn't contracting properly. They called it a holiday heart and I had to be sedated and shocked back into rhythm where it took them three times to get me back into rhythm because the first two times I flat-lined. I somewhat have to be more careful with what I drink and how much I drink. I would say that in a weekend total consumption would be like a handle of alcohol.

Harry stated that in his first year living on-campus at the university, he used to party a lot whereas now he does not live off-campus. He reported that:

Freshman/sophomore year it was a constant drink to get drunk type of thing.

There was not like a stop button. Consumed alcohol probably from Tuesday, Wednesday, definitely Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Every weekend my freshman/sophomore year. Then again, I was young, very stupid. Now days I just consume alcohol on what you would call special days.

He continued on sharing his more recent consumption behaviors, which is maybe one or two drinks in a week:

Now days, first of all, I am a lot older and a lot more mature so I will drink ...in certain settings or certain times. I really enjoy wine. If I am like chilling by myself, I will pour a glass of wine.

Max shared that being a resident assistant limits his access to alcohol consumption while living on campus, but shared that he may have three drinks in a month's span. Max reported what consuming alcohol looked like:

We do not go out to parties, but we have friends who are over twenty-one who like have a beer or a glass of wine or whatever. Really, my friend nor I are really into getting drunk so we will have one maybe if it is a stressful week. It is more like a company of everybody else. Just kind of relaxing and I think alcohol does help kind of ease the mind.

Andy expressed consuming alcohol in moderation and in his on-campus residence hall. He stated:

I do drink, but not like the people drink here if that makes sense. One that stops me is that being in a dorm, even though we are allowed to have liquor that is seven percent proof even though the stuff I drink is below that. If I have something or will be stressed out, I will have something to calm my nerves.

Nevertheless, I do not fall into the drinking culture of college students and be like let's go get drunk every Saturday.

When asked about the frequency of consuming alcohol, he reported:

It just depends, if my girlfriend and I are having dinner and she is having a drink, I will with her. Other than that, I would not because I feel that if I am eating and drinking I feel too much filled. I feel like I do not want to do that. In addition, if I

have been drinking at a bar, I feel like I have to finish my beer right away before I go where as I am at my dorm and I can casually drink it as time goes on and not worry about being in a rush.

Nick and Ian both reported not drinking alcohol at any point in their life; however, they would still be with their friends if their friends were consuming alcohol at the time.

**Structured and unstructured physical activity.** Participants were asked to provide accounts of any kind of physical activity that they have participated in at the university. Activity could range from structured programs in university athletics to intramural sports and recreational activities to pick-up games and anything in-between. Participants talked about what motivates them to exercise or what bears weight on choice of exercise.

***Motivation to exercise.*** Participants shared forms of motivation to exercise as it related to any structured and unstructured physical activity that they participated in. This motivation could stem from self-drive, consumption of food or alcohol, or routine in schedule.

Cole reported participating in intramural football and racquetball while being a student at the university as the only individual exercise he participated in. Andrew shared that his motivation to exercise was personal and was a combo of “just trying to be healthier but also trying to like lose weight, I guess.” He would also adjust in his diet or exercise:

There are times whenever I am eating fast food I would run a lot more tonight after this or ‘I probably shouldn’t drink at this party tonight just because of all of the calories’, but then I usually just kind of say, ‘you know whatever, it’s my

body, do whatever.’ Therefore, it is definitely a lot of the mental game for me, but I do not really think I have done much actually physically about it.

Nathan, a member of a fraternity, reported that he would exercise at the gym he would be there for an hour or hour and a half. Additionally, he added, “I used to stay at the gym much longer but I wasn’t as focused as I was so now I go in with a different mentality. Try to get everything done right away.” Nathan expressed where he gets his motivation to exercise:

I get motivation when people talk down on me. My roommate sometimes gets motivation from that too, at least that is how I feel. I take it as motivational and people look down upon you or judge you for something because especially when it is body image, because you can fix it.

Nathan previously participated in intramural dodgeball, but stopped because “I don’t have enough time to work out, do tugs, and then prepare for all of the Greek Week stuff.” He previously described behavior pertaining to alcohol consumption, but also reported how he would adapt his exercise to offset the consumption of alcohol:

Usually what I try to do is if I go out and drink, I will just have like strictly cardio and then like a calorie burner but not like I am going to do anything else, just to burn the alcohol. Sweat out the alcohol and get over the hangover and the beer sweats.

While Peter is still on the men’s swimming team, he doesn’t currently swim for the men’s swimming team and stated:

I have medical stuff going on and I have to look into getting surgery and my rib removed so I am never there (with the athletic team). I am restricted to things I



can do but I do like physical therapy like three or four times a week but when I go to the gym, I will try and go like three times a week and will try and go to the rec with the group that goes but like then again, I have a kind of a crazy schedule and go whenever.

Harry, a men's track & field athlete and Exercise Science major, disclosed that he finds time to exercise whenever he feels like the opportunity is available:

I have like Principles and Training class and I will lift in there occasionally.

Whenever I am feeling like it, I will go in there and lift something like bench press or do like more endurance type lifts just to build muscular endurance stuff.

Harry also shared his exercise motivation while being on the university's football team and how he changes his exercise routine:

For football, we bulked up to get beefy and we put the max weight on a bar and tried to lift it. For track, it is the completely opposite or at least the weights have changed. For squat, the most I ever do probably is 185 or 225 is probably the most I would ever do. I can go all of the way up to 490 but I just do not do that because there are different kinds of lifts. I am not trying to get bulky, I am just trying to maintain. I will go deeper and try to hold the squats or try to do different type of things. I do focus on I want to look leaner and I do not want to look as big.

Harry also shared that he participated in intramural basketball and playing basketball altogether, but just disliked the practices. He intended on participating in intramural flag football but he had to "be a certain period of time away from football" so he remained playing intramural basketball.

When asked to disclose on his motivations for exercise or activity, Nick reported:



I go all the time with my team. I would never exercise outside of practice or if we cannot have practice because there are NCAA rules prohibiting seven days a week. We might be expected or encouraged to run on our own. Reason being is that I am prone to injuries and the amount of work that we put in would make it very strange.

Ian reported that while he does not “have time to dedicate to actually being a part of a club sport, he looks forward to exercise and running:

I like to run and to work out. It is kind of my time to let my mind not really think about anything at all and just be shut down for a little bit and all I need to focus on is not being hit by a car. It feels good and I sleep better. I feel better. Running and exercise.

Andy shared that he does not work out at all right now, because he gets “too tired because of work, I’m constantly on my feet and at school I have homework to do so I don’t have time to do with the amount of work I have and the amount of work I do.”

Max reported how he finds motivation to exercise, “for me personally, because I am a performer. Working out is staying in shape is important. You don’t necessarily need to have the best body type but you have to at least move well.”

**Finding balance and routine.** The participants in this study were asked to describe their daily routine in the interview. Participants in this study shared that establishing balance and a routine were parts of their behaviors as it relates to their health. Participants also talked about how their peers and teammates influence the development of this routine. Consideration towards daily routine and balance in consumption of various substances, exercise, and other items were shared.

Nathan reported that he and his roommate with exhibit a certain routine following the two of them exercising at similar times:

So, most of the time we usually always end up going to the gym, so he will go to the gym and I will start cooking and then he will go in the shower then I will go into the shower and he will start cooking. You know, he would always push me to eat like thirty minutes after where we can get our maximum amount from the workout. If he is already making food, I will have a protein shake, get into the shower, then come out and eat. If you do the protein shake, then you do not have to eat as much, it makes you full.

Harry, a men's track & field athlete shared a little bit of his routine exercise with the team:

I exercise with the track team where we exercise Monday through Thursday. Friday depends on when the meet is. We lift Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. We are supposed to start at 3:15 PM, but some people get there around 3:30 PM. We go until 4:00 or 4:30 PM and then we do our cardio and run. We probably will be done around 5:30 PM.

Nathan shared that through his fraternity, he was a part of their own exercise regimen in preparation for the annual tug of war event, "the tugs members encourage that we go to the gym on our own time, our own accord. Tugs practices are Monday through Thursday and then strictly we all are on the rope pulling endurance for like an hour."

Ian lives off-campus with his family reported that he usually eats breakfast at home shared his typical day or routine that he participates in:

I am usually busy from morning to afternoon so I usually just try to sneak an hour for here for lunch. I try to eat between eleven and one sometime in that range.

Sometimes it does not work out like today I have not eaten lunch yet. Probably just going to be dinner. I do not make a habit of not eating lunch but today it just did not work out because I was so busy. Some days it is like, 'okay you get to run for thirty minutes and you get to watch an episode of *The Office*' that is your alone time for the day.

Ian continued on seeking out how he adapts his daily schedule to accommodate for as much as he wants to do, despite not being able to have enough time:

A lot of the time, I will run late at night. Sometimes like seven, eight, or nine o'clock at night or I will get a lift in in between two meetings. A lot of time, I do not have time to dedicate to actually being a party of a club sport. I really would like to, it would be a lot of fun, and I just do not quite have the time.

When asking about balancing diet and exercise as two entities or one, Max shared that he is trying to "find a nice balance between the two." Andrew reported routines pertaining to meal preparation, meal consumption, and exercise routines with his roommates, which are covered in the next section. Cole did not report any specific routine that he participated in alone that was part of their behavior related to health.

### **Social Forces That Influence How Male College Students Perceive Their Body Image**

There are multiple factors that arose as participants of this study reported various social forces that influence how they perceive their body image. Participants of this study were asked about their interactions with others on and off campus. Specifically, they

were asked with whom, if at all, they exercise, eat food, and drink alcohol with as well as asked the kinds of conversations and interactions they had during these moments. As they spoke the talked about interactions with roommates, group membership, and friend or significant other influence. Additional layers of themes exist and are explained appropriately concerning social force influence on perceptions of body image.

**Roommates.** Seven of the participants lived with at least one roommate in college while only two, Andy and Nick did not live with a roommate but did live on campus. Andy lived on-campus in double occupancy unit, rented as a single while Nick lived on-campus in a single occupancy unit before moving off-campus. While living on-campus, both Andy and Nick shared that the residents on their floor acted like their roommates, but were able to get away from them if need be. Participants who had roommates shared the various ways they interacted with roommate including exercise, consumption of alcohol, and consumption of food.

***Motivation to exercise.*** Participants shared how their roommates held some form of influence over them or encouraged them to exercise. Only participants of off-campus residences shared that their roommates had an influence on motivation to exercise. Andrew shared that one of his roommates in his off-campus apartment would work out with him at the beginning of the semester:

Whenever she moved in, we agreed that we were going to try to cook better together and try to work out often and usually when we worked out it would just be running. Sometimes we would go by the gym or the rec, usually just a lot of cardio stuff, never really weight things. At the beginning of the semester, it was every other day. Then by now, it is very infrequent because we have both gotten

so busy and literally, we were having a discussion like, 'crap, we kind of failed at staying active all semester but we are also really busy.' It's fine, we will work out over winter break. That was somewhat all our working out ever entailed. It was somewhat more watching what we ate and cooked and then simple workouts I would say.

Nathan reported that his roommate, a Kinesiology and Sports Study major, plays a role in how Nathan exercises and gets into a routine:

[He] Pushes me to go to the gym whenever we get the chance. Right now, we are strict with the schedule and working out and the fraternity is making us practice for tugs, which is brutal, boring, and hard.

Peter, a men's swimming athlete, lives off-campus with two women who are members of a social Greek-letter sorority and shared that he did not exercise with his roommates but did with his team while he was participating with the men's swimming team.

***Consumption of alcohol.*** Much like with motivation to exercise, roommates also held influential ties to participants in consuming alcohol or related behaviors. Participants shared their interaction with consuming alcoholic beverages in relation with being with their roommate while attending the university. Cole, a member of a social Greek-letter fraternity, shared his interactions with his roommates, who are not members of a social Greek-letter fraternity:

Monday through Friday of course we all see each other and we pre-game before we go to our respective places where we go and hang out at. Thursday or Friday if two of us are out in the main common area, the other one would come out and we



would just talk and drink before we go out. If we do not go out, we just talk, drink, and play beer pong.

Andrew reported consuming alcohol with his roommates, not members of a social Greek-letter fraternity, depending on the environment they were in and to the extent, they would consume:

If it is a party setting, it weirdly rather depends as there are some parties that I will attend and not drink at all due to I'm not in the mood or I feel that I have to babysit. Sometimes I will have a quite a lot; I never get to the point that I vomit though. I take care of myself in that sense. If we go to the bars, I actually drink very little A) because I do not have to pay for everything and B) just because I am going to have to figure out how we are going to get home. Whenever we go to the bar, I just offer to DD so it just depends.

Peter, a men's swimming athlete, reported that he probably goes out and drinks every weekend with his friends, not his roommates; however, they may not on Friday evenings if they have to work on Saturday. He expressed further that he and his friends normally go out on Saturdays and will pre-game whenever a friend's house is available. Peter added that:

Tuesdays, we try to go as a group to trivia at the [local bar]. Then at the end of every semester once we all take our last final; we all go to [local Latinx restaurant] and we get the biggest margarita we can and just finish that.

Andrew shared insight to how he and his roommates navigate around the consumption of alcohol depending on the circumstances:



Usually with us, it somewhat actually depends on our mood. For example, this past weekend there was a party that we all went to and one of my roommates; she does not drink at all, so that worked out well because we have a DD when she goes out with us. With us, it is usually we either go to a party with a bunch of people we know and the bars will only go if there is a group of people we really know. We never just go out and find random people to hang out with or whatever. If it is a Saturday night, we will sometimes invite some of our friends over. We had a game night this past Saturday, it was just casual drinking and many board games, it was fun.

Peter reported how he and his roommates engage in consuming alcohol together and what that looks like:

We probably go out every weekend, but then it just depends. Sometimes we will not go out on a Friday just because some ... there is a lot of us that have to work on Saturdays. We normally go out on Saturdays and we will I guess pre-game that ... we play drinking games on the weekends ... or depending on what time it is we will either go to [local bars]. I know on Tuesdays that we try to go as a group to trivia at the [local bar]. Then at the end of every semester once we all take our last final; we all go to [local Latinx restaurant] and we get the biggest margarita we can and just finish that.

Harry shared that during his first year living on-campus, he and his roommate who played on the university football team “used to party a lot” whereas now he is “more mature” as stated previously. As Nick and Ian do not consume alcohol, they did not share experiences consuming alcohol with their roommates.

*Consumption of food.* Participants disclosed how their roommates influenced their food consumption. Participants shared that their roommates influenced establishing plans to consume, prepare, and the consumption of food itself. Andrew reported that he and his off-campus roommates would coordinate their schedules occasionally to prepare and eat meals together:

By the time we are cooking or making dinner, it is around seven or eight. What we will do it is we will try to plan it a couple days in advance whenever we are going to make food together. If not, we will just go get the stuff that day. We usually just split it between the three of us. One of us will buy one part, the other the other, and so forth. As for location, it is generally at our house. It kind of depends on the nature of the meal or kind of how busy we are as if we actually eat it at the like the kitchen table or if we just kind of eat it in front of the TV, which, I would say especially now with how busy we are it is more in front of the TV.

Nathan shared that his roommate in the KSS program would give Nathan advice on eating specific foods to help with diet and exercise:

He always used to tell me that when you wake up in the morning, that you have a high protein breakfast. He will give me advice to eat more salads, more vegetables, take more vitamins. after you work out, and try to eat twenty minutes after you work out. I have taken all of the exercise science advice he has given me and it has been working; I mean I think it has been working. He has good points on as you get older, there are things you have to watch out for and I know that diabetes runs in my family so it is better to start watching out now while you are

young instead of when you are older. I weight a lot less last semester than I did this semester and I thank my roommate for that.

Nathan shared that when he would go grocery shopping with his roommate, he would see his roommate get stuff and think it looked good so he would end up getting the same thing. Nathan would do that or also get something else because it looked good.

Peter reported that he and his roommates over his experience at the university exposed themselves to various ways of eating together:

Every once in a while, we like sushi and we will go to Osaka in Mattoon and get sushi together or the other night like one of my roommates and I made sushi at the house together. But we have also like when it was fall and football was going on, we would tailgate together and we all bought a grill and tailgate in the front yard. Every Sunday we will sit down and have dinner together and just kind of like hangout on Sunday nights. I mean, we have a group chat and ... it's like early afternoon we will just be like, 'hey, what's everybody doing tonight' and if nobody is doing anything we will just ask, 'hey do you want to get food?' That is pretty much what we do.

Harry stated that he, his wife, and his other roommate who competes on the women's track & field team try to eat their meals in their apartment:

Most of the time, we try to eat at our table, we try to cook meals the majority of the time because if we go out to eat then we are going to eat stuff that is not that good for us.

Ian reported very little on eating meals with his family/roommates. He stated, "Saturday mornings I will have a bigger breakfast, I will actually have a sit-down

breakfast with my family but not necessarily every day.” He also said that his main source of food is from home.

Max stated that when he lived in Thomas Hall with his roommate his first year, “late night was a big thing; we got a lot of pizza. I would say we definitely like eating; it was our big thing. We would just eat a lot.” It was at this point that Max and his roommate “would go and get whatever was being served at the dining hall or Taco Bell or McDonalds or whatever we decided we needed.”

**Group membership.** While participants belong to a predominantly male group such as a social Greek-letter fraternity or university athletic team, participants were also involved in other registered student organizations at the university. Experience that the participant’s involvement may have regarding their body image was considered and is shared in the sub-themes below.

***Fraternity members.*** Participants that identified as male members of a social Greek-letter fraternity reported that their fraternity held some influence over their health behavior decision making. These fraternity affiliated participants shared topics such as alcohol consumption, food consumption, and motivation to exercise.

Cole, who lives on-campus with roommates not involved in a social Greek-letter fraternity, reported that he and his fraternity members drank alcohol together and frequently. He further described the experience with his fraternity members:

Usually with my fraternity, we have parties on the weekend and stuff like that. I pre-game with them, play a little beer pong, talk to a few people, come down to our room and chill. Almost every day of the week. I would say it started Thursday and would not end maybe until Sunday; I built up a super-high tolerance. We did

not have really nothing else to do but drink and go to parties. We used to work the parties. I would just serve the punch. A few parties before this last one, I am just sitting there thinking to myself, 'I can't do this anymore.' I did not belong anymore. It is just not who I am. When I joined this fraternity, I had all types of ideas and stuff like that. I was kind of forcing myself to become something I am not. I noticed when I am around my fraternity brothers I drink and that's because I am able to deal with them on that level when I drink. When I am sober, it is just I could deal with them but I get irritated and it is not because they do not listen to anything like that it is just because the things that they do. I am closer to them when I drink than when I do not drink.

Cole and Andrew, members of different social Greek-letter fraternities, shared how their fraternity membership had an influence on their meal consumption. Cole stated, "I knew I could eat anything I wanted [during the day] because later on I knew I was working out with my Ship [fraternity brother]." Andrew shared that he and his social Greek-letter fraternity established a regular habit of eating together. He stated that, "we usually have this other tradition of dollar burgers where every Thursday we will go to the Panther Paw and get their dollar burgers there."

Nathan reported that his social Greek-letter fraternity has him busy with physical activities as well as exercise with members:

The fraternity is making us practice for tugs, which is brutal, boring, and hard. I work out with my friend John, a solid person. He always talks like he does a certain workout and I do a certain workout and I wouldn't want to do that work out and he will be like, 'oh, suck it up and come on and do it' and I will end up



doing it and will regret it later. It is motivation in the way I see it, it is always like pushing each other more than what we should.

In addition, Nathan expressed that his fraternity life involvement “sometimes always involves, at least a good amount of it, involves drinking, but that wasn’t everything that we did. Every other week we would go out.” He continued to share that every other week he and his fraternity members would go out.

*Athletic sport members.* Participants that identified as members of a university athletic team reported that their athletic sport involvement held some influence over their health behavior decision making. These participants shared topics such as routine exercise as well as describing their bodies with others. Harry reported that he would exercise within a routine with the men’s track & field team:

I exercise with the track team where we exercise Monday through Thursday.

Friday depends on when the meet is. We lift Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. We are supposed to start at 3:15 PM and ... go until 4:00 or 4:30 PM and then we do our cardio and run. We probably will be done around 5:30 PM.

Harry also shared that he would exercise with a men’s track & field teammate where they just talk about random things like “jokes about lifting, we make jokes about track, or how hard the work out is going to be.”

Nick reported that he recently had a conversation with a peer teammate on what their bodies look like:

I had this conversation with my teammate Greg, I was like, ‘you have a body that is pretty normal and nobody would be able to pick out that you were a running in



a line up' and he is by no means big and super skinny. His ribs do not show with this shirt off kind of deal. Not like me who is like that and is very skinny.

***On-campus involvements.*** Participants could belong to any group in this study, but could also belong to other groups not considered until the interview was conducted. Following the interviews, only one participant disclosed his participation with another on-campus group that had an influence on how he perceived his body. In addition to being involved in his social Greek-letter fraternity, Cole was involved with the university's ROTC. He reported exercising with a fraternity brother and stated, "I joined ROTC, I was working out every day and then he was working out and we had a competition." Cole added further that he found motivation to get in shape through routine exercise as a member of ROTC.

***Friend or significant other influence.*** Participants recognized and reported individuals with whom they interact with whether it is exercise or food consumption. In their interview, participants noted individuals in their friend group or significant others having influenced their body image.

***Motivation to exercise.*** Participants shared that other motivations to exercise exist, outside of their involvements and among their more intimate circles. Participants reported friends, significant others, coworkers, and others who are present at the gym may influence how they view themselves. Harry disclosed that he and one of his friends exercise together and serve as mutual motivation:

Brandon, I am probably with him the most as we are in the Rec playing basketball. He is trying to put on some weight so he is trying to get into lifting. I help him out with that or tell him some stuff that he can do or he will tell me

about his workouts and ask me what to do. We are like the active type because last weekend we were in the Rec playing basketball for like four hours. We played some pickup games here and there.

Max reported his experience working out with a coworker in the university housing and dining office:

We work out at like 6:00 AM every morning. We bond that way. We were doing a kind of like a run for a while and then we would go lift but now we are starting an Insanity Max 30 or whatever. We are doing that right now which is actually insane. They are not lying when they call it insanity. We try to do Monday through Friday.

Ian reported that while exercising at the gym, those who are in the environment might influence how he thinks about his body:

When it comes to body and body image, I will go to the gym and you are lifting next to someone who is much stronger than you are, it does make you feel a little like, 'man I wish I was a little bit stronger like him.' I try not to put too much stock into it, let it get me down, and discourage me from going to the gym or anything like that. I think it is natural to see somebody is faster, stronger, more athletic than you are it's like, I wish I could be a little more like him but at the end of the day you are who you are and you do what you can with what you got.

Ian also shared that he finds motivation to look good physically for his girlfriend in addition to self-motivation:

I think part of the reason I do want to have a little bit more muscle and be fit is that I want to look good for my girlfriend; I do not want to let myself go. I think

that it adds a little extra motivation to go running and it is not that I think, 'oh, you gained ten pounds, I am going to break up with you.' I do not think that would be a thing, but I think in the back of your head you are like, 'you want to look your best for your girlfriend' or if you are single look your best for a potential girlfriend. I do not know if it is an obsessive thing, but I think it is a little extra motivation. She says she likes the way that I look and is comfortable with the way I am so she does not really expect me to change; which is a good thing. It might be extra pressure if she said she did, but she has never made any comments like that. We are both active, she was a swimmer and runs a little bit now too. She always came right out and told me when we first started dating, 'I like the way you look just fine.'

***Consumption of food.*** Participants reported that, similar to motivations to exercise, other individuals hold some influence on their consumption of food. Consideration to consume food may exist from significant others to financial awareness and cost assessment. Ian did disclose that he and his girlfriend would eat food together including what drove them to eat:

I will go over to my girlfriend's apartment and cook or go out to eat and something like that. On Wednesday nights, [local pizza] for sure. The rest of the time, actually we usually will just eat at the union because it is so convenient. My girlfriend is a penny pincher too. We schedule stuff in advance and we will go to the store a lot for what we like or what we are in the mood for. We will usually buy stuff that makes the economic sense. We will buy chicken, vegetables, stuff that is going to be substantial and will hold us over. We know how to cook. My

girlfriend is a little pickier than I am but I am not picky. At night, I will pretty much go for anything. Usually what it is, 'what are you in the mood for or what's semi-healthy?'

While Andy lives alone on-campus, he shared he considers money when eating out and says he will "try to save as much money as I can but usually the most of when I go out is with my girlfriend." In addition, he occasionally will eat with those who live on his floor or floor mates who have an impact on how he eats food, "We usually talk about it, it depends if we eat with them, where do they want to eat, or what sounds good. We can see the dining menus from our phones. It all depends on what is being served."

Max reported on some thoughts that he has as far as why he felt the need to diet a certain way with his coworker who he works out with:

Dieting is not really our thing, but we are working on it. We are trying to eat better but we are starting with working out and changing our diet plan a little bit. We have to be like; 'remember, we have to diet today' and we are like, 'yes.' We don't always eat together, but when we do, we remind each other like, 'hey, you don't have enough vegetables or enough fruit' and then we will laugh about it and go get some.

### **Undergraduate College Men Describing Their Body**

Participants were asked to describe how they view their body, parts that they were more favorable of, and those that they were less favorable about. They were also asked to speak about how they would change the way they look and what they would do differently to attain a specific ideal image. The themes that emerged from this included

self-awareness and confidence, specific body areas, and attaining future self-goals which all are described below.

**Self-awareness and confidence.** Participants shared how they view themselves and their bodies. Participants described their bodies in relation to levels of confidence and self-awareness as well as acknowledging their previous and current states of body image.

*Description of self.* Participants stated various responses when prompted to talk about themselves. Self-perceived levels of attractiveness, stages of physical ability, proportions of body mass, and adapting to changes to the body were revealed. When asked to describe his level of attractiveness, Andrew shared it was at or above average:

I would consider myself averagely attractive. Just because I consider myself attractive to a certain standpoint, but I would not say there is anything about me that is like, ‘oh my God, that is extremely attractive.’ I would say that I am a little bit above average, but nothing spectacular.

Nathan shared that when he came to the university that he, “was in better physical shape than what I consider myself now.” He reported that he sometimes pushes to exercise more than he should:

I will get a view that maybe I am not doing enough, but I feel like I am pushing myself adequately for the shape that I was in before. Not more to fit in but more for my body image. More for my gain of the workout, not because it matters to me what they actually think.

Peter, a men’s swimming athlete reported on how he looked physically:

I guess like average; I am not like those people that do [university sponsored body building competition], I am not going to have like that chiseled body or anything



like that. Granted, I have done athletics for seventeen plus years and I have never been that skinny, twig, or fit person. I always did distance and I use my shoulders and arms more for anything, I did not really kick. I have a broader shoulder and upper chest. I am comfortable with myself and how I am.

Harry, a men's track & field athlete, described himself and his expectations of self:

To me, even though I know I am not fat, I would say I am fat. I definitely have a lot of meat around certain areas or fat around certain areas that I do not want to have present. I would say I would call myself fat even though I am not in the slightest. But I think it is just how I perceive myself because in my head I know what I want to do and I know what I want to get at and so until I am there I will continue to tell myself that I am fat or overweight. I do dislike certain areas of my body like my chest and my arms but I am dissatisfied. They are not meeting my...if I were to hold expectations or criteria...they are not meeting those but I am not dissatisfied with how my body looks as a whole. Just pertaining to this...how I say this...I am satisfied as I look as a whole there are just certain areas that are lacking. I used to not take my shirt off at all if I were to go swim or something because I felt that I was too fat but now that is not even a thing anymore. Yeah, I may call myself fat or feel fat because my chest is more like boobs or whatever, but overall I am satisfied as my body looks over all as a whole.

Nick explained his realization in change of routine as an injured university athlete as well as his concern about searching for what he considers to be more normal:



All last year I was hurt so I did bump up [weight] to 151 or 152 and I would notice things that nobody else would notice me getting bigger but you notice yourself so much more and maybe it was in my head. I was like, 'this is cool, my arms are starting to look like normal sized.' They probably did not look too much different; I would be doing pushups and be like, 'this is awesome.' This was great as far as body image and what not.

Ian, a student involved in activities outside of university athletics and social Greek-letter fraternity life, expressed his level of health and where he believed he stood physically:

I am average. I am healthy; I do not get sick very often. I consider myself healthy and active because I lead a healthy lifestyle. I do not really get into a lot of high-risk behavior. I have the body type to you know, if I want to go play a game of basketball and not be out of breath. If I want to go run, I can go run. If you want to go zip lining or an obstacle course, I can do that. If I needed to go and work the garden, I can do that. I guess I am just happy that any physical activity that someone wants me or needs me to do I can pretty much do with the exception of ice skating/skiing.

Andy, a student not currently involved in any activities at the university, reported how he viewed himself and what he believed his body looks like:

I am tall, I guess fat, but I would say but my size kind of cancels that out because of how tall I am. It rather cancels my stomach that I have. I am a little chubby, tall and I have bad eye vision, if you could tell from my glasses. I do not know really

how to describe myself when it comes to that. Maybe a little chubby, heavy set, tall, with glasses and light skinned.

*Comfortable with self.* In addition to describing how they view themselves, participants also shared points of confidence or revealed comfort with how they view themselves. Cole, member of a social Greek-letter fraternity, shared that he saw himself for who he wants to be:

I see who I want to become, but it is like a good book. It is a process; it is definitely a work in process and it is always something I can better about myself. Therefore, I see myself as somebody who is constantly working on becoming something more.

Andrew, also a member of a social Greek-letter fraternity, shared how his beard is almost a sign of defiance towards his father:

Because it is something that is different from me because a lot of times I have noticed that a lot of people, like a lot of guys, facial hair is like how their fathers does theirs. My dad, not at all. He is completely clean-shaven; he was not happy when I started growing it. Kind of defying what is expected of me because I hate societal expectations and I hate when parental expectations are kind of stupid and ridiculous. Just kind of the fact that my dad was kind of being a prick about the fact that I was going to let myself grow a beard, it kind of drove me more to grow one and now I just keep it. Now I actually like it, at first it was defiance more than anything.

Peter, a men's swimming athlete, reported that he is happy with who he is and how he looks:

I am happy with who I am and how I look. To me, that is all that matters, is that you are happy with myself and none of my friends have said anything negative about how I look and I don't think any of us would. Mentally and emotionally, I am satisfied with who I am and what I look like. I am who I am and I am comfortable in my skin that is all that matters at the end of the day. I do not need people to tell me I am supposed to look this way or if you do not look that way, you are not accepted. I am like, 'whatever, that is your opinion it is not the fact.'

Nick, a men's cross country athlete, talked about how different social circles impacted how comfortable he was with himself:

I think, for the most part, when I am trying to run and when I am trying to run around other runners, I am not very self-conscious of how I look; I will take off my shirt. When I am in social circles, like when my new friends and I are going to the beach or the friends that I am close with like AJ, the football player, I would not feel self-conscious because he knows me; he knows how skinny I am.

Nick continued on to explain his level of comfort:

It becomes very complicated when I talk about the different worlds that I live in: being around other runners and athletes at practice opposed to being around other people. I think that I become more accepting around other people than I was in the past. I would be somewhat concerned if I went out in a short sleeve t-shirt my freshman year or if I was in high school I would feel very weird. On warm nights at the beginning of the year, if I were to go to a party or something, I would feel very self-conscious wearing short-sleeved shirts because my elbow is the thickest part of my arm. It is very apparent how skinny I am because my arms are very

long and lanky. I am very lanky so I think that over time I will wear short sleeve shirts. I have realized that I have grown to know that you look at yourself more harshly than other people are going to be looking at you. I think that I have gotten more accepting of my own body image.

Max, a resident assistant in an on-campus residence hall, described the way he looks how he does not think he has grown into his body. Like Nick, Max thinks about the way his body looks when he takes his shirt off among others he is not used to:

I would say young and I do not know. I used to be so awkward and ganglily and weird, but I feel that I have filled in so I just have long arms. Long arms and I look young so I think I have filled in a lot and have grown into my body. I do not really feel that personally for myself I am just...I look young, I guess. I am a confident person when it comes to being me. I guess obviously like the six-pack thing I kind of have some tub down there but like it is one of those things that I am not threatened about but I subconsciously think about it when I take off my shirt in front of a crowd or whatever. It is something that you think about but I mean it never like...it is like yeah, that sucks but whatever. I am a confident person.

*Societal and social comparison.* Participants, in describing themselves compared how they looked to others in social circles as well as societal expectations and norms. Cole shared that despite being a short male, he is “not about to let these media type of images or the way people perceive me make me any less of the person that I am.”

Nick talked about interactions among new acquaintances and the comparisons he makes:

If I were hanging out with new friends and we were going out the beach or something like that, I would feel somewhat self-conscious about taking off my shirt because I really do lack any pectoral muscles. If I am breathing a little bit, you can see my rib cage quite a bit so that is something that I keep in mind. When I am at practice or around other runners, it is not something that I ever consider but when I am in different social circle, it is definitely something that comes into consideration.

*Media comparison.* Some participants shared their viewpoints on how common forms of media can influence individual body image. Peter stated, “I do not think I have to look like the ads and everything that are portrayed out there.” He further reported:

I think it all comes down to society and how we perceive people. Just because it is not, it does not look the way that society wants it to look. It is not how it is portrayed in magazines and in underwear ads, modeling, or stuff like that. It all comes back to I think society and psychology and how people perceive things and that it's like because of advertisements, it's supposed to be this way. I don't let that get to me because I know it's like who I am, who I am comfortable in my own skin and I don't have to look like those people to have friends or to find somebody to love. It's not worth putting yourself through hell and back and starving yourself and having eating disorders, being depressed, or having anxiety because of it. It's your mental state is way more important than your physical. Because of advertisements in our society today, it is going to take a lot to have that corrected. It is just you do not see companies portraying plus sized models or girls with curves because society doesn't see that as acceptable. It just goes back



to like, sociology fear of like the structural or the symbolic interaction, we are who we are because of how we are raised and who we were raised around. Everything heads back to how we perceive things and how society reacts to certain topics.

*Changing body image.* Participants, in talking about their bodies also talked about how their bodies have changed while in college. Cole shared how earlier in his attendance at the university he worked out with his fraternity brother, “I was definitely pretty fit. I had abs, I was at a summer body, I was happy with my own body.” Nathan, a member of a social Greek-letter fraternity, reported:

I mean, I am happy with the way that I look, but I could lose some weight. I know I could lose some weight, but I am not you know. It is not like a bad kind of thing. It is more just like if I lost a few pounds it would be great but it is not like affecting me in any kind of way. I haven't gotten like ‘you’re ugly’ or anything like that in high school, but yeah because everybody was immature.

Nick shared some of his experience running long distances for the university men’s cross country team. He noted how his body would change depending on the level of intensity or regular routine:

Interesting things happen when you stop running 80 miles a week to 0 miles a week. My roommate during the school year would notice that I would stand up and get light headed once a day. I would assume it was just from the vast decrease and then I would feel winded from simple tasks just felt so un-natural after being a competitive runner for now something like seven years. Those kinds of things felt strange to me as well. That is something I factor when I want to quit running.



It feels like, in some way, freedom to be able to go out on a Sunday and run 16 miles. If we had this interview walking tonight, you would not be able to tell what I did that. I would not be hobbling or anything like that. Being able to do that is such a driver and what I consider my body image and how I would like to improve that that is something that I also consider is that I will also lose that as well.

Nick also stated that he enjoys the ability to go out and run or exercise for long periods of time, “because I have done it long enough and I continue to do it so much so that like I said that 80-90% of the time it is very easy.” Nick shared his concern on having lower exercise endurance than he had as an athlete, “getting away from that [routine collegiate athlete exercise] is something that scares me about my body image getting to be what I would find to be more normal.”

**Specific body areas.** Participants were asked to not only describe the way they look, but also to include parts of the way they look that they are more favorable of and those that they were less favorable about. Participants responded stating either specific parts of their body or approximate areas. When asked if Cole had parts of his body that he liked more than others he shared, “I don’t really like one more than another. Internally, my personality is something I am constantly trying to change.”

*Positively favored areas of the body.* Participants revealed that there were areas or parts of their body that they identified as favorable. Responses varied from Ian who stated, “I am proud of the fact that I am nice sized” to Nathan who shared that he is most favorable of getting a good haircut. Harry, a men’s track & field athlete, spoke of his back and legs and reported:

I have always found them to be more defined and where I am stronger. I am good at squats and deadlift as those are the parts that I focus on the most and where I am stronger; I am proud of those.

Peter spoke about his legs, specifically “my calves and my quads are very distinct when I flex.” When asked about his body parts that Nick stated, “I think that my core and my abs are not too bad.” Max, a resident assistant in an on-campus residence hall reported, “I like the young parts of my face and I do like have being tall” Andy shared about his legs and their capability to keep him up regularly through activity such as soccer. From playing soccer growing up, Andy believed that his leg muscles gained familiarity to carrying extra weight from his torso and stomach area.

Harry shared that when he exercises, he notices what other patrons are exercising and takes note depending on what is going on:

Usually when you go to the workout facilities or like in the rec, you see many people working on arms and I am like, did you miss leg day? My ankles and legs are like really skinny even though I can work them out as much as I want but my legs are always going to be skinny and people think that I cannot lift, but I can lift when I squat because I deadlift.

*Less favorable areas of the body.* Participants reported areas and parts of their body that they were less favorable about and why those areas made them feel that way. Andrew shared:

One thing that also kind of runs in my family, that none of us likes is our nose structure. Just because our noses are a little larger, I mean, I am not unhappy with mine, I guess I am neutral to it. If I were to say something, it would be that. I

guess because the fact that I have gained a little bit of weight since high school I am a little unhappy with that, but not to the point that I really care that much. As if I care enough that, I know I want to get back into working out, but I do not care enough that I am freaking about it or having any eating disorders or anything like that. I just do not care enough.

Nathan shared “just my stomach, that is my biggest concern but you know because I was in better shape before I came to school.” When asked why his stomach was a concern, he added:

“Because of the bad eating habits I had in my first semester here and over the summer. That is what it is due to; it is not like, ‘I could always slim down a few little more’ but it’s not like I am not like thinking about it or anything about it.”

When asked about areas that Peter was less favorable about, he responded, “I don’t think there is anything. If I had to choose something, I would choose my stomach; then again I don’t see it as a huge thing.” Harry stated that his arms and chest are the biggest thing that he is not so favorable of:

I need to focus on arms and chest because I feel that I have boobs rather than an actual chest. Even though my arms are strong, they are not as defined or as cut as I would like them to be. If I were to rank them on a scale or which one I do not like the most I would probably say my chest, then I would say my arms.

Ian stated that he could make some effort and adjust the way he looks, particularly at gaining some muscle:

The mirrors are sometimes unforgiving, but I could probably stand to gain a little bit more muscle. Not because I think I need to be necessarily Mr. EIU but just I

think running is good and I think it is healthy but I could stand to add a couple pounds of muscle on just to be fit. Not necessarily to fight somebody but just, hey it would be nice to get a little more muscle on, to look fit. I know that muscles, I am not saying to be totally jacked, but just a little bit more muscle tone. I have pretty small arms and pretty small legs so probably a little more muscle would not hurt.

While he liked the young parts of his face, Max reported, "I don't like the blemishes that come with it. Max continued on and shared, "I have a great widow's peak that is annoying. Some cowlicks in the back of my hair. My skin tone is somewhat red and is blotchy sometimes." Like Max, Andy reported that he was less favorable with his face while adding also being less favorable with his upper body:

My face feels like it is rounded and my neck of course. I could build that jaw line at least and even my stomach for instance my chest I am as I do have man boobs. In high school when people make fun of me for having that and one person would scoop me at random and I one time flipped out and pushed him against the locker because I was upset about it. It still upsets me in my chest part and even my stomach. Everything above this point [chest] my arms too because for the size that I am my arms are too small from seeing other people and how big they are.

Nathan reported that he has small calf muscles on his legs and he would receive harassment or pressure to exercise them more:

Sometimes they will make fun of me they will be like, 'what are you doing? You are doing chest again? Don't skip leg day again.' I know I don't have to work out my legs more than my upper body. Comments like that, but I know as genetically,

Latinos have small calf muscles so some people have big calves. I have small valves; my legs are like one of the things I need to work on and they will push me to do that. I try to do leg days once or twice a week if I can because if you kill your legs, one time you will not want to do anything for the rest of the week.

**Attaining future self-goals.** Participants shared how they plan to move forward in relation to body image, and were asked to provide insight to where they would go from their current state. Participants disclosed any specific or special changes they would consider to their appearance and noted consumption of food and adapting their routines and exercise to their future.

***Special change for appearance.*** Participants were given the opportunity to share what they would do or are currently doing to change their body image or appearance. Andrew shared that, “the only thing I would do would be to just exercise and just to trim off some of the weight. Other than that, nothing really ridiculous or specific.” Nathan reported that he would “just not eat like crazy or maintaining my diet and working out.” Peter stated some change in behaviors that he will have to look towards after he is done performing on the men’s swimming team:

I have tried to eat healthy and I have worked out. It is something I have been working on seventeen years and I still look the same; I do not think there is much more to possibly do. I am going to have to watch what I eat and how much I eat because working out for twenty plus hours a week I could pretty much eat whatever I wanted and maintained where I was. Now that I do not, I do have to eat healthier and I cannot just like eat out whenever I want. I am not one of those people who have a high metabolism and can eat whatever whenever and what



amount of quantity and just stay the same. Seventeen years of athletics, I do not know what much more is going to change if I work out every single day.

Harry shared that in addition to focusing on exercising his arms and chest; he mentioned exercising his abs and that he would also change how his skin feels:

Make sure that my skin is moisturized. I always put lotion on. I use cocoa butter based, either if it is lotion or cocoa butter that is harder and you have to rub it around to be able to apply it to your skin. It is avoiding ashy-ness and to keep my skin moisturized. I do not like when my hands are ashy or my legs are ashy. I like to be moisturized and it makes me... I feel better just about my body if I am moisturized. With my hair, I let it be. I do not really do much with that. I try to do abs a lot, because if anything if I do not have the chest, I want the abs. I try to focus on that a lot because I feel like I have a lot more physique than I did in high school. Primarily because that was what I was a lot slenderer than I am now.

Other than making sure that my body is moisturized and I do not do much besides work out to try to improve the areas that I am lacking in or the areas that I dislike about my body.

Nick described that he is scared for what his body will look like if he continues to exercise as he currently does:

One of the things that kind of scares me about continuing to run is the fact that I will still be like this especially with romantic relationships trying to be attractive that comes into play and that is something that is in my head. So, we were talking about running after college and I was like, 'I really wish that I could flip a switch while I am doing the running itself and be like this is because I love it and what



not. I love how I feel when I am like this.' Over the summer, I was not running and I was up to 151 or 152 opposed to 138 [pounds] and it was all in my head. Being this skinny comes, what it took to be that skinny and your heartrate being able to go out there and run 10 miles and it be nothing. It is somewhat associative that my body image is well and the feeling so de-associating opposed to what it takes to get that image. It is a complicated aspect but the conversation we were having was that I wish that I could flip that switch, be 138 pounds running, and then flip the switch when I want to be in the social circles and be 155 or 160 and what not. Look like a normal person.

Nick stated that he could not think of much that he would change on the daily, except "for different things like I had a picture for my professional picture for business so I shaved for that." He added further, what he is going to look for in the future:

I struggle thinking if I want to be looking this way through my 20s or if I want to go to an aesthetic normal, which would be an interesting journey for me. Until this point it has been mute because there was no way that I was going to sacrifice running or athletics for the body image aspect of it. I do look at myself and think, 'gosh am I ever going to grow up or are people going to start seeing me as an adult? Should I quit running for that being a reason? Could I consider quitting competitive running?' I would still, you know, hobby jog here and there just to be in shape but competitive running will become a factor next year when I consider okay, 'I plan on running half-marathon in the fall.' After that, it will become down to my workload in graduate school and my workload as a professional. After that as well as I have had few injuries but along with those factors, those three or four

other factors my body image does become a consideration. I had a conversation the other day that we had a teammate that was muscular for being a runner but being muscular did not hinder his running. I was like, 'I wish I look like that, I would continue running forever because that would be awesome to look like I have some nice abs, nice decent pecs, and what not.' Decent sized arms where people would never be able to pick you out like, 'you are definitely being a runner.' I can see that kind of thing but I had the conversation like I wish I looked like that, that would be perfect.

When prompted if he would do anything to change his appearance, Ian reported: I do not think too much of it; I think I am fine. There are some times that I need a haircut or oh, I haven't run in a while and I don't want to you know, add on too much more weight but overall, week to week, I wouldn't say and look at myself in the mirror and think, what a stud. I do not think I would look in the mirror and say, oh what a loser. It is what it is and I got what I got.

Andy reported that he plans to exercise and adapt his diet to adjust the way he looks physically:

Just work out and lose the fat that I have and try to get a toned body. I try to get a toned body I guess and try to work out and try to fix the diet I am on right now I guess the food wise. I eat many fatty foods so I am feeling like I should cut back on that too to get back to where I want to be at first.

Max shared that he would focus on his core to change the way he looks physically by stating, "more abs, more ab workouts. Getting a six-pack is something that I always wanted but I hate doing it. But it is fun; it would be fun if I had it."

**Compared to their peers.** Participants shared how they view themselves in comparison to their peers or friend groups. Participants were asked to talk about how their friends would describe themselves and if there was any difference between the two. When asked how Cole would compare himself to his peers, he stated, “I would probably say I am not the most attractive, I am not the least attractive.”

Harry reported that, compared to his friends,

I am more of the...bigger than they are. I weigh the most especially in track because everybody is...I do not think anybody is above 187 and I am in the 200s. I am a big person going around the track so I am a lot heavier than they are. I carry a lot more fat but I also carry a lot more muscle than they do. I would say that compared to them I am a lot bigger.

While Ian talked about how he is looking to add muscle mass to his body, he also described how his friends look compared to himself:

I have a lot of friends that are stronger than I am and friends that can run faster than I can. I try not to compare though because I mean at the end of the day, I do not want to say it does not matter but I guess I keep track of my body more for healthy purposes than just activeness and fitness. I know that I am always going to be stronger than somebody is and someone is always going to be stronger, faster or smarter. I kind of look at it and go, ‘you know, that person is really good at working out, lifts a lot,’ maybe model after him but not necessarily be him.

Andy reported that he compares areas of his body to those around him and how he feels about it:

My arms are not huge compared to others. I feel overweight sometimes because I see other people that the height difference is small but their arms are huge and I do not see myself that way. My arms are just puny and to me they look small. If I am looking at a person who is a little heavier set, I will be as if I could be like that person but I am not so I am okay. When I look at people that are more fit than I am, it makes me feel a little awkward because I can be that way but I do not have the time to do that. It does make me wonder if I do push myself a little bit more, if I can do it and get that way instead of being lazy. It does not make me judge myself, it makes me want to push myself and I am hoping to get to that point to push myself and to work out and get to a body type that I would like to be at than where I am at right now. My friends I guess we are all medium sized we are all just different heights. I look okay compared to them and it is not as if I am not going to judge because we are mostly all the same. The ones back at home are starting to work out a lot to the point that one is more heavy set than I am. When I hang out with him, I feel awkward that I have to look bigger than him sometimes or try to act bigger. It is like to get his size. My other friend who is skinny wished he had our body or the meat we have but he is all bone. The ones here feel equally but the one back home, the one that works out a lot I feel that I have to be at his point to.

***Comments on body by others.*** Participants identified body parts and body areas that gained compliments from other individuals. These comments were paired with how participants would describe their bodies either in response to the comments or regardless

to them. Andrew reported that his eyes, beard, and butt were areas that he is more favorable of than others were:

I love my beard. I would say probably my beard and then definitely my eyes because the number of compliments that I have gotten because of my eye color, because not many people have dark green eyes, but kind of the combo of those two I would say. For lack of professionalism, I have gotten enough compliments on my butt that I think it is good so, I guess those three things. Primarily my beard and my eyes.

Cole shared that when he was like 17 and 18 years-old he “used to get big headed” when people “called me cute and handsome and things like that.” He further shared, “As I got older, it stopped; I didn’t really care about those things, I was just living my life. I stopped trying to impress other people.” Andrew reported earlier that he receives compliments on his eyes and his butt by other individuals.

Nick, a men’s cross country athlete, reported that “a lot of people don’t understand when they call me skinny, that that is like calling a fat person fat.” He further shared that he responds differently to being called skinny depending on the circumstances:

With my teammates and if any of them called me skinny, it would not really phase me. We are close and they know why I am the way that I am. If somebody else were to make a remark about it, especially if it was a girl that would be not quite to the extent that I mean calling a fat person fat can be pretty disheartening for them. Pretty good at brushing things off but it is in some way shape or form offensive because that is the body that I live in and that is who I am. I will show

you now; my elbow is the thickest part of my arm by far. I will joke about that with my friends but when you are not my friend or you are not close to me sometimes they do not realize that it is not a compliment. In social circles, if you are in running circles it is I mean it can be a compliment but it is a remark. In social circles, it is definitely as much of a ... people think it is somewhat of a compliment or that it is appropriate to say and I consider myself to have really thick skin but if I didn't have such thick skin I would be really offended by this. I get sometimes somebody will say something and I will be like I wish they didn't say that. If I had thin skin, I would be really offended if somebody commented on my weight like that.

### **Conclusion**

The participants provided insight toward the description of their health behaviors, social forces that influence their perceptions of their body, and descriptions of their bodies and how they felt in them. Ultimately, a large part of how the participants identified themselves concerning their body image was through the association of others. It is important to note that while other individuals held some stake in the perceptions of body image, participants were still able to identify their own behaviors and describe their bodies and their spot on the spectrum of awareness and self-confidence.



## **Chapter V**

### **Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to examine perceptions of body image among college men that attend a mid-sized Midwestern public institution. This study was designed to identify what influences individual male body image and specifically if their membership in same sex student groups influence their perception. The researcher established the following research questions to better understand how undergraduate college men construct their body image: (1) How do men describe their behaviors related to health? (2) What social forces (i.e. media, social media, peer groups, etc.) do male college students identify as having the influence on how they perceive their body image? (3) How do college men describe their body? In this chapter the results that presented themselves in the current study are discussed, recommendations for student affairs professionals are provided, and suggestions for future research are shared.

### **Discussion**

Through analyzing interview transcripts which illustrated their stories and responses to the interview protocol, the researcher was able to understand the perspectives in which the participants illustrated their perceptions of body image. These perspectives are shared through revisiting the research questions initially proposed in this study. Interest was settled upon similarities in perceptions of body image among participants despite which tier of university interaction they self-identified from.

**How college men describe their behaviors related to health.** Participants of this study were selected due to their increased level of involvement at their university, especially those in single-gender groups, as well as their upperclassmen status. Despite

their level of involvement and status at the university, all participants still identified that establishing order and balance with pursuing a healthier lifestyle was a challenge. While each participant identified some awareness of eating well and understood that exercise could be a part of daily routine, they all admitted that they could adopt better health behaviors and were struggling to maintain their current ones. Participants even recognized that multiple services existed to aid in more beneficial health behaviors such as the university recreation center, healthy options provided by on-campus dining. While they were equipped with the knowledge and access to these services, participants admitted to not following through on pursuing them. Whether it be consuming balanced meals throughout the day, establishing a healthy exercise routine alone or with others, or finding time for self-care, college students such as those in this study may need to re-evaluate their day-to-day priorities to maintain healthy order through completion of their college career. Conversely, college men may already be practicing healthy behaviors regularly but are comparing their efforts to the outcomes received by others and not feeling accomplished.

Participants of the current study shared that they were exposed to a culture where consumption of alcohol was appropriate regardless of age or affiliation. While a majority of participants openly shared their experiences partaking in consuming alcoholic beverages, select few reported abstaining from consuming alcohol for personal reasons being either taste, family expectation or exposure, or impacting their single-gender group affiliation activities. Participants belonging to social Greek letter fraternities and university sport teams were more likely to engage in social drinking behavior than the other participants. Participants belonging to a university sport team shared that multiple

athletic teams may be present at the same party or gathering where alcohol is being consumed whereas social Greek letter fraternities are exclusive to their select male membership. Members of social Greek letter fraternities may be at greater risk for consumption of alcohol by peer pressure than the other participant groups. Amongst all of the participant groups, men belonging to a social-Greek fraternity identified most with consuming alcohol multiple times per session and multiple sessions per week either alone or with peers. All participants of this study were aware of the affects that consuming alcohol may have on themselves or their peers. Participants from university sport teams and social Greek letter fraternities are more likely than other participant groups to participate in high-risk consumption and binge drinking culture.

**Social force influence on perceptions of body image.** The single-gender group which had the greatest influence on perception of body image among college men was male athletes. Participants from social Greek-letter fraternities and non-affiliated groups did not provide the researcher much insight on their group's influence on their body image. All participants did however share some form of influence by their peers or an immediate relation in their own microsystem. The most apparent finding of this study was the reliance on others to establish normalcy in different avenues. While participants shared that they may live with a roommate or within a community living structure, what remains intriguing is that they all seemed to participate in similar behaviors. Whether it be preparing and eating meals, exercising, or socializing with others, the impact of those who lived with participants had the greatest influence. This increased level of influence can appropriately be explained by the amount of exposure established between individuals sharing a living space or interacting in an environment together. Participants

belonging to a residence hall community or living in an environment where others similar in age and culture were more likely to imprint similar ideals and behaviors into one another than those who don't. This form of social learning among college men pairs well with how men are to establish normative behavior and expectations of their intimate relationships and environment.

What is also important to note, is that the path of venturing out into the surrounding community to indulge in alcohol consumption behavior was more times dependent on those in their inner social spheres. This inner social sphere, as Bronfenbrenner (1979) would note, is considered the microsystem of interaction where the individual establishes connections with those closest to them such as family, peers, immediate relationships, etc. It is within this microsystem of these participants that they all establish specific interests as a group where they determine together whether they go out and socialize with other sets of microsystems or not.

Participants in talking about their health behaviors, first relating to self, then followed by any interaction they may have with their roommates or affiliated groups such as a fraternity, division I university sports team, etc. In almost every case, there was more detail on behavior participated in or observed by others than on their own. Participants seemed to be more comfortable talking about others rather than about themselves. Furthermore, participants did not necessarily talk with other men regarding body health behaviors, but they did understand the need and observe it when it occurred. Participant's talked about observing others eating, drinking either conversational or social, exercising, or shopping. Those in the participant's microsystem have a great influence on them and if they encourage them to participate in unhealthy behaviors, participants may follow suit.

Contrarily, if those in their microsystem encourage healthy body behaviors they are more likely to adopt healthier behaviors. Participants did hold some role in influencing their peers when it came to deciding to act on behaviors such as exercise, meal consumption, or exposure to alcohol related environments. This adds to previous thought that the roles of peers and the individual them self together build towards mutual social influence or expectation for certain behaviors to take place.

**How college men describe their body.** All the participants expressed some description of themselves and how they felt about their bodies as well as in comparison to their peers. Some participants shared that they would occasionally exercise and see other male college students and aspire to have that body type, but not place much stock in to pursuing that image. While this finding didn't surface in the literature, it did add to the premise that college men may compare other male body types to their own. These study participants described other individuals' bodies because they were areas that they themselves could work towards if they chose. This study revealed that while college men were keen to observe the body types of those around them, they were reluctant to pursue what they believed to be attractive or more befitting. The study also shows that college men constantly are aware of their body image and the influences that interact with their day-to-day activities. College men are aware that some areas were more favorable to them and hold a more internalized level of pride than the less favorable ones. At the same time, college men may openly acknowledge that they would prefer to lose some weight or to tone up their body but would not due to motivation or drive to acquire a specific body image. Therefore, it is safe to assume that college men are, for the most part, more dissatisfied with the way they look than satisfied. While levels of satisfaction may



fluctuate depending on self-reflection, it may also be driven by who others interact or observe their body.

These college men may seek out the help of their roommate, organizational member, or self-drive to reach a desired physical body type. College men may also harbor potentially unnecessary stress and discomfort when surrounded by others whom they are not regularly associated with. Some college men can feel uneasy with showing parts off their body such as the chest, abdomen, legs, or a combination of areas due to how they felt about others seeing their body. This was revealed by participants such as Nick who have an atypical body type and shared that they may have a difficult time seeing past comments made from others on their body, despite the comments being made presumably in good faith.

### **Recommendations for Student Affairs Professionals**

The current study revealed that among social circles exists impactful peer influence that can be both positive and negative. Single-gender student organization groups such as fraternities and athletic teams establish a sense of belonging among members where group think and interaction may run rampant if not monitored appropriately.

College and university professionals need to take proactive and appropriate measures and means to informally monitor the well-being of the students they serve. While the role of the professional may not be directly tethered to student's regular decision making, they can foster an environment and provide ways for peers to play a larger role. Regularly charging student organization leadership and executive boards to check-in on their members' performance, student affairs professionals may be able to



gauge irregular activity and intervene responsibly with productive responses. Particular signs of interest to professionals include any unique or uncustomary consumption of food, alcohol, or other substances by way of regular fasting, bingeing, purging or any combination of the three by members of student organizations.

While the journey through college asks students to learn a specific subject matter or discipline, it should also focus on the ongoing education of taking care of oneself. It is important that student affairs professionals take into consideration how their students receive useful and appropriate education on how to take care of themselves.

Administrators could aid in the transparency of available resources and education outcomes for a healthier environment for college students. Professionals in multiple departments should abide by university initiatives and moves toward a student-centered philosophy based on education and health. Administrators can adopt programs through their campus that highlight when activities or areas of their facilities touch on the many dimensions of wellness: emotional, environmental, financial, spiritual, intellectual, occupational, physical, social, and/or spiritual.

Perhaps one of the most monumental moments in a college student's life is the transition from their previous stage into higher education. Student affairs professionals need to equip students early with the tools and resources to help make healthy decisions about their bodies. This includes being informed about resources available to them. To do this, universities and colleges need to provide information and access to community and campus resources such as campus health and counseling services, community mental health organizations, and wellness center food preparation and cooking courses for their students as early as possible to students. Programming efforts also need be made to

include risk alternative late night event programming, weekend and academic break programming, and regular presentations surrounding the personal, social, and inclusive environments where alcohol, recreational substances, fitness areas, and food places are located, just to name a few.

Student affairs professionals also have a great opportunity to develop their student leaders by allowing them to first learn what the signs of positive health behaviors are personally and then learn how to effectively program community-wide collaborative efforts to share with their peers. By connecting student organizations including single-gender groups to community resources, collaboration could flourish impacting many audiences such as youth, adults, elderly and community facets including parks and recreation, environmental growth and sustainability, tourism, and less fortunate communities to name a few. A social Greek-letter fraternity or group of fraternities, for example, can work with community after school youth programs providing tutoring, play and exercise, or other positively constructive impacts to all involved. It would also be beneficial to help the student leaders learn how to identify unhealthy behaviors and how to intervene, offer resources, and support their classmates.

College and university athletic staff and professionals could also look to support and aid in the development of their single-gendered groups. Athletic team staff can provide services and educational opportunities to allow their students increased awareness for meal preparation and consumption methods that best match their athletic routine and rigor. In addition to providing a balanced dietary regimen, athletic professionals should work with the athletic dietitians to create a respectable fitness schedule that encourages appropriate body growth and avoids excessive exercise and

potential unhealthy behaviors that may follow to supplement for desired muscle or fitness gains by student athletes. Much like the other student affairs professionals overseeing or advising a single-gendered group, appropriate awareness of male athlete behavior and response to various social stimuli can help curb or prevent unhealthy behaviors that may influence negative or less favorable body image perceptions among student athletes.

Student affairs administrators need to collaborate with their respective university faculty groups in an effort to support students both in and out of single-gender membership groups through diverse course offerings. Together, they will aid in the availability of course offerings in certification for students to use and take beyond their college career. Course offerings can include training and certification to handle food, administer first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), being a life guard, and other public service skills may equip the students with a more diverse and rich experience outside of the classroom. In addition to certification level education, university faculty and student affairs professionals could push to adopt an elective curriculum focusing on meal preparation and cooking, pairing a nutrition plan to various lifestyles, time management, appropriate exercise programs, and internship opportunities with community and university offices and organizations to serve their peers. This newly established partnership could continue onward to working with the university through dining services or community by fire department and first responders to provide training and internship opportunities if chosen to become available.

College is where students can spend several years learning and developing, it is important to know that the college's role in their life can be quite crucial. Student affairs professionals at colleges and universities should understand that they are one of the first

support systems that these young men encounter or come across in this stage of their life. These professionals can create and foster a healthy environment for students to grow and develop into talented young men and citizens. In working as a team, student affairs professionals and the surrounding community of the university or college can help prepare young men for the next stage in life.

### **Recommendations for Future Studies**

The following recommendations for future research of undergraduate college men and how they construct their body image. Participants of this study were all upperclassmen men who self-identified as belonging to either a social Greek-letter fraternity, division I university athletic team, or involved in another area on campus. Future research could include the comparison of other single-gender or gender groups in the hope to better understand whether or not specific differences or similarities exist. Furthermore, appropriate focus on gathering a more general sample of the site population may allow for more diverse results. Majority of participants in this study were primarily heavily involved in multiple facets of the university and not fairly represent male college students as a population on campus. While a majority of research surrounds the body image perceptions of females (Pompper, 2010), a more robust understanding of other gender groups may allow student affairs professionals to cater more to the needs and experiences of a more diverse community. While the current study focused on upperclassmen, more research can still look to tracking how the participants view themselves throughout their entire college career. This research could show whether the participants made positive or negative health behavior decisions depending on their

awareness of body image. This could allow future researchers the chance to better understand how undergraduate college student body image may change over time.

In addition to considering a more longitudinal approach, future research could focus on the impact and results from an underclassmen's perspective of body image. As freshman and sophomore college students are adapting more to the transition to the college environment, their perceptions of body image may be more diverse and shift depending on the stimuli that exist in their respective environments and engagements with their peers. Further investigation could compare under- and upper-classmen perceptions and gather any variation that may exist. Future studies may also look at how graduate students construct their body image perceptions and what influences exist. Participants from this study provided their living arrangement history to the researcher to help illustrate any impact or influence that their roommates may have had on their body image perceptions. A more in-depth evaluation and investigation into the participant's roommates, floor mates, or family members may offer another perspective to how college students establish specific body image perceptions. Future research focusing on the different kinds of campus involvement, its origin along the participant's journey in college, and the stages that they become affiliated may also be of importance to this community. Having a greater understanding to how and why a college student becomes involved or simply decides why not may also establish a foundation towards a specific body image and outcomes that follow during their college career.

## **Conclusion**

Cash and Pruzinsky (2002) stated that college is a time where young people begin to evaluate the perception and attitude towards their physical appearance and the body



image encompassing physical satisfaction as well as dissatisfaction. The purpose of this study was to examine perceptions of body image among college men and to identify what influences individual male body image and if their membership in same sex student groups influence their perception.

While participants of this study did self-identify their membership in single-gender group, much of the conversation dealing with their perceptions of their body image had little to do with their group membership. This led the researcher to conclude that while membership in a single-gender group may be a large part of the individual's social identity influence, it may not hold much of an influence on the personal identity with respect to body image. Male college students that are represented in this study rely more on independent and intimate relationships with their roommates, close employees, family, and friends to establishing their body image. When those intimate relationships extend into a greater social circle of peers the influence may still be present, however, the influence shifts more towards the greater group think and depends on dominant roles that are present. Male college students are, almost entirely, aware of their body image and how they can achieve a more favorable body image. While their awareness is present, they depend on strong support systems and motivators to engage their drive towards their more favorable body image desires. These favorable and desired body image goals can be supplemented by appropriate health behaviors including, but not limited to, regular food and beverage consumption, lifestyle respectable exercise, and social interaction. Male college students who are represented in this study have access to the means and services to obtain their body image goals, they only need to engage and act toward them.



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**Appendix A: Demographic Information**

Participant Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(CODE: \_\_\_\_\_)

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Year in College: \_\_\_\_\_ Year at institution: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Major: \_\_\_\_\_ Minor: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Anticipated graduation date: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Hometown: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Where have you lived while in college?

Location	Dates	Did you have a roommate?

What organizations are you a member of:

What leadership positions have you held?

## **Appendix B: Interview Guide Protocol**

### **Interview Protocol**

- What are your thoughts on this topic? (Body image)
- How do you define body image?
- Tell me about your life before coming to college.
  - Where are you from?
  - What was your relationship like with your parents/guardian?
  - Describe what your neighborhood/high school community was like.
  - Tell me about the friends/peers you had growing up. (Where did they live compared to you? How long did you know them? What did you do together?)
  - What sorts of things were you involved in?
- Tell me about your experiences here thus far.
  - What is your major?
  - What year are you in school?
  - When you came to this institution, where did you live in the community?  
Did you have (a) roommate(s)?
    - How would you describe your relationship with your roommate(s)?
    - What did you recall doing with your roommate(s)?
    - Expand on what your relationship was with your roommate.
    - What did you and your roommate talk about and do together?
- Tell me about your current living situation?
  - Where do you live? How long have you lived there?
  - Who do you live with? How would you describe your relationship with your roommate(s)?
  - What do you do with your roommate(s)?
  - What do you and your roommate talk about and do together?
- Describe your friend group (s) for me.
  - Is there a group that you are closest with? If so, why?
  - What about these people do you like?
  - What do you think your friend group looks like to others?

- What do you think others would say about your group?
- What do you and your friends do together? (each question, ask in the individual sense as well)
  - Do you all exercise together? (How often? Where?) Tell me about the conversations you have while working out or preparing to work-out.
  - Do you all participate in club or intramural sports? (If so, which ones?)
  - What type of television shows or movies do you watch together? (How often? What types of conversations do you typically have during these times?)
  - Do you read or talk about magazines or books? (Do any of your friends read the same things?)
    - Do you ever talk about things you are reading with others? Tell me about those conversations.
  - Tell me about getting together with your friends to eat. Do you eat at a particular spot on-campus? Off-campus? Cook together? (How often?)
  - Tell me about going out for a drink or party with your friends.
    - Where do you typically go? (How often?)
    - How much do you typically consume? How does this compare with some of your friends?
  - How often do you go shopping with your friends?
    - What kind of shopping do you do?
    - Can you describe the types of conversations you have with people?
- Describe a typical day for you.
  - How do you start out your day, what is your class schedule like? When do you grab your meals?
  - Do you spend time alone? (If so, why? If not, why?)
- What sorts of things are you involved in on campus?
  - Tell me about your experiences as a Division I Athlete/Member of a Fraternity?
    - What would I see if I was a member?
    - What do people outside of your group not understand?



- Tell me about your team/fraternity.
  - What sorts of things do you do together, structured and unstructured?
  - What kinds of conversations do you have with one another?
- Describe how your experience may be different from students not in your fraternity/on your team.
- In what ways are you mentored through this organization? By whom? (Can you provide examples).
- What type of relationship do you have with the coach/advisor?
  - What type of role do they play in your life?
  - What kinds of conversations do you have with them? What do you typically talk about?
  - In what ways do they influence how you feel about yourself?
- What institutionally sponsored events do you participate in?
  - Intramural sports, club sports, body building, homecoming, sorority sweetheart, tugs, etc. - tell me about your experiences with these things.
- How would you describe yourself?
  - Tell me more about why you describe yourself that way.
  - How would your friends describe you?
  - In what ways is your description of yourself the same or different from your main friend groups?
- How would you describe the way you look?
  - What parts of the way you look are you proud of? Why?
  - What parts of the way you look are you unhappy about? Why?
  - How would you describe yourself compared to the way your friends look?
  - Is there anything special you do to improve the way you look?
  - Tell me about your level of satisfaction with the way you look.
- What else would you like me to know about you?
- Is there anything you thought I would ask you about? What?
  - Has your definition or description of body image changed throughout this interview?

- Is there anything else you would like to add at this time? DO you have any questions for me?